

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATION
PHD PROGRAM IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATION**

PHD DISSERTATION

**THE WESTERN BALKANS IN TURKISH FOREIGN
POLICY IN THE POST COLD WAR PERIOD
(1990-2021)**

**DENİZ MEMEDİ
14716024**

**THESIS ADVISOR
Prof. Dr. MEHMET HACISALİHOĞLU**

İSTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

THE WESTERN BALKANS IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST COLD WAR PERIOD (1990-2021)

Deniz Memedi

June, 2021

This study seeks to examine the Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans from the end of the Cold War until the present day (2021). Historically, the Balkan Peninsula has been a region of crucial importance to the Ottoman Empire and, later on, to the modern-era Turkey. In addition to the geostrategic importance of the Balkan Peninsula as the only land corridor of Turkey to Europe, other factors such as security, economy, kinship ties, and culture have played decisive role in the active engagement of Turkey in this region. During the Cold War, the expansion of its foreign policy faced limitations as a result of the bipolar nature of the international system. In this period, the foreign policy of Turkey in the Balkan region mainly was passive and static. But, after 1990, a greater space for Turkish active presence and engagement in the Balkan region was created with the transformation of the international order and the transition from a bipolar to a unipolar system led by the United States. In this context, the process of violent disintegration of former Yugoslavia was the first serious test for the Turkish foreign policy. However, Turkey through the diplomacy, participation in military and peacekeeping missions and expression of care of refugees fleeing wars, has achieved to be more engaged in the Western Balkans during 1990's. Meanwhile, the beginning of the 21st century marked a change in its domestic policy. The ruling coalitions of the 1990s came to an end. From 2002 until today, Turkey is led by a single party, the Justice and Development Party (JDP). Despite changes in domestic policy, Turkish foreign policy under JDP continued with its active engagement in the Western Balkans during the first two decades of the 21st century. In this framework, this PhD thesis will assess the

following question: “Is foreign policy of Turkey under the leadership of the JDP a continuation of the active policy of the 1990s in the Western Balkans?” It concludes that Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans marks a continuation of its active engagement from the beginning of the post-Cold War period to the present day. This means that, during this thirty-year period, Turkey has expanded its scope and taken an active part in all major developments in the Western Balkans, thus abandoning the policy of non-involvement in regional issues that was characteristic during the period of Cold War.

Key Words: Western Balkans, Turkish Foreign Policy, Post - Cold War Period, International Relations, Diplomacy.

ÖZET

SOĞUK SAVAŞ SONRASI DÖNEMİNDE TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASINDA BATI BALKANLAR (1990-2021)

Deniz Memedi

Haziran, 2021

Bu çalışma, Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden günümüze dek (2021) Türkiye'nin Batı Balkanlar'daki dış politikasını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tarihsel olarak Balkan Yarımadası, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve daha sonra modern Türkiye için hayati öneme sahip bir bölge olmuştur. Türkiye'nin Avrupa'ya tek kara koridoru olan Balkan Yarımadası'nın jeostratejik öneminin yanısıra, Türkiye'nin bu bölgeye aktif katılımında güvenlik, ekonomi, akrabalık, kültür gibi faktörlerde belirleyici olmuştur. Soğuk Savaş döneminde uluslararası sistemin iki kutuplu yapısı gereği Türkiye, dış politikasını genişletme bağlamında kısıtlarla karşıkarşıya kalmıştır. Bu dönemde Türkiye'nin Balkan bölgesindeki dış politikası büyük ölçüde pasif ve durağandı. 1990'dan sonra uluslararası sistemin dönüşümü ve iki kutuplu sistemden ABD'nin başını çektiği tek kutuplu sisteme geçilmesiyle birlikte ise Türkiye'nin Balkan bölgesinde varlık göstermesi ve etkinlik sağlaması için elverişli bir ortam ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu konjonktürde Türkiye'nin dış politikası için ilk ciddi sınav, Yugoslavya'nın şiddet yoluyla gerçekleşen dağılma süreci olmuştur. Aktif diplomasisi, askeri ve barışçıl koruma misyonlarına katılım ve savaşlardan kaçan mültecilere kucak açma politikasıyla Türkiye 1990'lı yıllarda Batı Balkanlar'daki gelişmelerde söz sahibi olmayı başarmıştır. Diğer yandan, 21.yüzyılın başlarında Türkiye'nin iç politikasında bir değişiklik olmuş ve 1990'ların koalisyonlar dönemi sona ererek, 2002'den bugüne dek Türkiye'yi tek parti iktidarı olarak Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) yönetmiştir. İç politikadaki değişikliklere rağmen, Türkiye'nin 1990'larda başlayan Batı Balkanlar'daki angajmanlarını 21.yüzyılın ilk yirmi yılında AKP yönetimi de sürdürmüştür. Bu çerçevede, bu doktora tezinin temel araştırma

sorusu, AKP iktidarı döneminde Türkiye'nin Batı Balkanlar'a dönük dış politikası, 1990'lardan itibaren yürütülen aktif dış politikanın bir devamı mıdır? olacaktır. Tez, Türkiye'nin Batı Balkanlar'daki dış politikasının Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemin başlangıcından günümüze kadar bir devamlılık arz ettiği sonucuna varmaktadır. Bu sonuç, son otuz yıllık dönemde, Türkiye'nin Batı Balkanlar'daki tüm önemli gelişmelerde aktif rol aldığı ve böylelikle Soğuk Savaş döneminde karakteristik olan bölgesel meselelere karışmama politikasından vazgeçtiği anlamına gelir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Batı Balkanlarlar, Türk Dış Politikası, Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönem, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Diplomasi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACITAD:	Albanian Chamber of International Trade and Development
BSEC:	Black Sea Economic Cooperation
BiH:	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BBC:	British Radio Television
CNN:	Cable News Network
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
CoE:	Council of Europe
DLP:	Democratic Left Party
DUI:	Democratic Union for Integration
DLK:	Democratic League of Kosovo
EU:	European Union
EULEX:	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
IFOR:	The Implementation Force
JDP:	Justice and Development Party
KLA:	Kosovo Liberation Army
KAS:	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
KFOR:	Kosovo Force

MP:	Motherland Party
MIST:	Memorial International School Tirana
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organizations
NLA:	National Liberation Army
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OFA:	Ohrid Framework Agreement
OSCE:	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC:	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PIC:	Peace Implementation Council
PISG:	Provisional Institutions of Self-Government
PKK:	Kurdistan Worker's Party
RPP:	Republican People's Party
SDA:	Party of Democratic Action
SDP:	Sandžak Democratic Party
SCC:	Serbian Chamber of Commerce
SEECp:	South-East European Cooperation Process
SAP:	Stabilisation and Association Process
SDPP:	Social Democratic People's Party
TIKA:	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TPP:	True Path Party

UN: United Nations

USA: United States of America

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

UNPROFOR: United Nations Protection Force

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNMIK: United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WP: Welfare Party

WFD: Westminster Foundation for Democracy

YTB: Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Subject and Purpose of the PhD thesis

The subject of this doctoral thesis is the foreign policy of Turkey in the Western Balkans from the end of the Cold War up to present (2021).

The term “the Western Balkans” is apolitical neologism which includes the countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania, and excludes Slovenia and later Croatia. The international community and especially the European Union use the term "Western Balkans" to refer to the Balkan area that includes states that are not members of the EU. While Turkey in official language does not use the term Western Balkans, but defines its relations toward these states as the relations with the Balkan states. However, in the framework of the doctoral thesis we will use the term Western Balkans which includes the countries of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania, in order to define the framework of elaboration of the subject of this PhD thesis.

While the purpose of this doctoral thesis is to analyze the approach of Turkish foreign policy in the developments in Western Balkans from 1990 to 2021 in the framework of four main phases, respectively the first phase from 1990 to 2002, the second from 2002 to 2009, the third 2009 to 2016 and the last from 2016 until nowadays. This means that the analysis of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans will be conducted in the context of developments in a certain period of time frame for nearly thirty years, divided into 4 main phases. More specifically, this PhD thesis aims to explain the purposes of Turkey's presence in the Western Balkans, its approach to developments in the region, the instruments used to influence and the attitude of the academic and political circles of the Western Balkans regarding the presence of Turkey in the region.

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s marked many radical changes, leading to a new world order with the USA as the sole superpower. During this period, communism fell, socialism was discredited as an idea, while the USA politically, economically, militarily and culturally remained without any rival on the world stage. The geopolitical and ideological competition between the USA and the Soviet Union ceased. The end of the Cold War changed the international system and with this began a new era in international politics. The change of the international system also aroused the need of re-examining the foreign policies of the countries that in the past were part of the Cold War. The spheres of influence defined by the bipolar system were no longer valid. This meant that a greater space was created for interaction between different states.

Turkey as a relevant actor of the Cold War period, positioned alongside the West, represented a frontline state against the Soviet Union. In general, during this period, Turkey acted on the suggestions proposed by its Western Allies against the Communist Bloc. Turkey's goal during this period was preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity through the principle of neutrality and status quo. In a word, as a result of the bipolar nature of the international system, Turkey was faced with limitations in the context of extending its foreign policy.¹

The Post-Cold War years paved the way for new opportunities for Turkey in terms of foreign policy expansion. The disintegration of the Soviet Union but also that of Yugoslavia led to the establishment of independent states. These developments that were taking place close to the geography of Turkey, imposed to the Turkish leadership to find the proper responses in the context of its positioning in the new geopolitical constellations. Such circumstances led Turkey to begin to develop a more active and multi-directional foreign policy with the countries of its neighboring regions such as the Caucasus, the Black Sea, the Middle East and the Balkans.

¹ Turkey's Cyprus intervention and the falling out with the US leading to the Johnson letter may be one of the exceptions during this period. For more see: "Cyprus (Historical Overview)", **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus-_historical-overview_.en.mfa, [10.05.2021]; "Johnson Warns Inonu on Cyprus; Invites Him to U.S. for Talks—Turkey Said to Give Up Plan for a Landing". **The New York Times**, 06.06.1964, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/06/06/archives/johnson-warns-inonu-on-cyprus-invites-him-to-us-for-talksturkey.html>, [10.05.2021]; "Johnson Mektubu", http://www.akintarihi.com/turktarihi/cumhuriyetdonemi/johnson_mektubu/johnson_mektubu.html, [10.05.2021].

Since active and multidimensional foreign policy concepts will be used during this PhD thesis, a clarification of these concepts needs to be made. The concept of an active foreign policy of a given state means the commitment to participate in constructive efforts that help build and maintain a peaceful and prosperous world through efforts to mediate between parties involved in the conflict, participation in peacekeeping missions, intensification of economic cooperation, the initiation of regional and international platforms where states will cooperate in the field of economy, politics, security, etc., the promotion of the multicultural concept and the coexistence of civilizations, etc. These initiatives taken by a certain country in this case Turkey, refer to the concept of having an active foreign policy. And during the elaboration of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans, it will be seen that compared to the period of the Cold War where Turkey's foreign policy towards this region has been mainly static and passive, after 1990 it is characterized by a active policy by taking mediation initiatives, participation in peacekeeping military missions, creating space for businesses to make economic investments in nearby regions of Turkey, initiating regional platforms as well as involving new actors such as think tanks, non governmental organization, cultural and economic organizations etc.² While with the concept of multidirectional foreign policy means the expansion of the scope of foreign policy action in more regions and cooperation with many countries rather than focusing on single-axis approach to foreign policy. According to Emil Avdalani, Multi directional foreign policy model provides “more room for maneuver, economic gains, and growth of geopolitical power.”³ In case of Turkey, this approach take into consideration the integration in the European Union, good relations with Russia, and Turkey's policy in Eurasia as part of a consistent policy that serves to supplement each other. This approach aims to explain that good relations

² E. Fuat Keyman, Sebnem Gumuscu, **Democracy, Identity, and Foreign Policy in Turkey Hegemony through Transformation** (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 73-74; Ufuk Ulutaş, “Turkish Foreign Policy in 2009: A Year of Pro-activity”, **Insight Turkey Commentaries**, Vol. 12, No.1 (2010): 1;

“Policy of Zero Problems with our Neighbors”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>, [15.05.2021]/

³ Emil Avdalani, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Balancing Act”, **Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies**, 21.03.2021, <https://besacenter.org/turkey-foreign-policy-balancing-2/>, [16.05.2021].

with Russia does not replace the relations with the EU, or the strategic relationship with the USA it is not relationship against Russia.⁴

For Turkish foreign policy, the Balkan region has a relevant importance in various points of view such as historical, geostrategic, economic, cultural, kinship, etc. Turkey, as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, has deep roots in the Balkans, which makes it consider this region to be one of the most important priorities of Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey was closely following the implications facing the Balkans, specifically the Yugoslav region. Even the leaders of the constituent republics of Yugoslavia visited Ankara one after another, in order to seek support for independence. Although Turkey's initial stance was towards supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, the determination of the constituent republics for independence from the federation, made known to all relevant actors of international community that there was no possibility for survival of the federation. The USA and the European community were the first to make the decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia as independent states. After them, on February 6, 1992, Turkey officially recognized the independence of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, and in August of the same year established diplomatic relations with these countries.

In general, after the Cold War period until nowadays (2021), Turkey's relations with the states of former Yugoslavia or today known as the Western Balkans states (including Albania and excluding Slovenia and Croatia) have gone through four distinct periods.

The first period is considered to be the 1990s, where Turkey after a long period of absence, began to show its presence in the Balkan region. Even though it was not a good start of Turkish activism, considering the beginning of the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia which was not done peacefully, however managed to have a more participatory approach to the developments taking place in this region. Turkey's main priority in the Balkan region during this period was the preservation of security. In the conflicting circumstances of the Balkans, the interruption of the transit route from Turkey to Europe for Turkish citizens and businesses and the possible emergence of a

⁴ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 10, No.1 (2008): 81.

refugee crisis were realities that could seriously affect Turkey's national security and interests. Active diplomacy and military presence were considered to be the two instruments that were mostly used in the framework of Turkish foreign policy during the 1990s. Through the element of diplomacy, Turkey managed to establish diplomatic relations with the countries of the former Yugoslavia, while intensified relations with Albania that had just transited from the communist system to a liberal democracy and market economy. In addition to developing and intensifying relations with these countries, the second function of Turkish diplomacy was the effort to help find a solutions to the successive conflicts that had gripped the region. This effort has been made in bilateral meetings with the parties involved in the conflict, as well as in international organizations.

Meanwhile, Turkey also showed its active presence in the Balkans through the military element. Turkish military took part in all NATO military operations in the former Yugoslavia aimed at restoring peace and stability in the region. In addition, the Turkish military has participated in all post-conflict international peacekeeping missions in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia as well as in Albania after the internal chaos caused by the pyramid scheme failures in 1997.

It is also worth noting that during this period where conflicts erupted one after the other, Turkey was among the countries that had opened its doors to refugees who had fled the war. A significant part of them were sheltered in their relatives they had in Turkey, while the rest were sheltered in the refugee camps.

The second phase begins with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002, which opened a new page in Turkey's foreign policy. In the first years of its rule, one of the top objectives of the JDP was Turkey's integration into the European Union, which was also a long-standing objective of previous governments before the JDP. But, the JDP was more concrete with adoption of series of reform packages to meet EU requirements as a precondition for integration. On the other hand there was a positive climate by the EU towards the enlargement process. In fact, this period was considered as the Europeanization of Turkey's foreign policy, which implies that Turkey as a candidate country tried to fit both domestic and foreign policy with the

European Union. The EU integration process was also a tool that the JDP was using in order to minimize the power of the army in decision-making processes. In a word, the adoption of the reforms required by the EU shifted the balance of power in civil-military relations in favor of the former.

Turkey's ambitions for EU integration coincided with the ambitions of the Western Balkan states that also aimed the integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. This period marked the intensification of Turkey's bilateral meetings with the states of the Western Balkans. Euro-Atlantic integration has been a priority topic during these meetings. Given that Turkey is one of the oldest and most relevant members of NATO, the Turkish leadership in each of these meetings has emphasized its full support and the readiness for advocacy for the integration of Western Balkan countries into NATO. While regarding EU integration, Turkey thought that its integration would be more applicable in case of collaboration and exchange of experiences regarding the integration process with the countries of the Western Balkans.

Apart of Euro-Atlantic process, two other issues that marked Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans during this period were the increase of Turkish investment, and lobbying for the recognition of the independence of Kosovo. Since the JDP came to power, Turkish investments in the Balkan countries have significantly increased. Today, Turkish investors in the Balkans are present in various sectors such as telecommunications, textiles, food products, construction, airports, banking sector, etc. While regarding the independence of Kosovo, Turkey continued to pursue the policies of the 1990s by positioning itself on the same side with the Western international community, recognizing Kosovo as an independent state, and lobbying for new recognitions for the youngest state of Europe, especially in Muslim countries.

Regarding the process of Turkey's integration into the European Union, decisions by EU member states to block negotiating chapters, faded away Turkey's ambitions towards EU integration. Given these circumstances, as well as the arrival of Ahmet Davutoğlu as Turkish Foreign Minister in 2009, it seemed the right momentum to follow a more independent foreign policy, especially in Turkey's close regions. In Davutoğlu's vision, a new golden period can be achieved with the "revival of Ottoman heritage". According to

him, Turkey together with the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans are the epicenter of world politics.⁵ In fact this is the beginning of the third phase of Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans.

The period in which Davutoğlu was in the position of foreign minister between 2009-2014, and later as a prime minister between 2014-2016, was characterized by an active approach to regional-global engagements through elements such as economic investments, mediation attempts, active access of Turkish official agencies / organizations, civil society, cultural activities, etc.

In this period Turkey expanded its range of action in the Western Balkans. In addition to economic investments as well as her lobbying in NATO for the countries of this region, Turkey re-established her relations with Serbia, took the responsibility of mediator between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina creating the trilateral mechanism, as well as having active approach by agencies/organizations supported by Turkish state. TIKA, Yunus Emre, Diyanet and YTB with the development of various projects enabled the citizens of this region to have a closer interaction with Turkey. Diplomatic and academic circles named this period as Neo-Ottomanism. In an affirmative context, the term describes a Turkish foreign policy that derives from the legitimacy as a longtime imperial power in her close regions such as the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus. At its worst, this term suggests hegemonic ulterior motives behind Turkey's new activism.⁶ The dilemmas over the Neo Ottoman discourse grew even more after some cases like Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo in 2009, request from the Turkish leadership to change the history books in Kosovo as well as the famous phrase of Turkish Prime Minister of that time Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Prizren emphasizing that "Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo".

The peaceful environment within Turkey and its neighboring regions created a suitable environment for the country to become more actively involved in the regions. But, the

⁵ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Ottoman Heritage and Muslim Communities in the Today's Balkan", Lecture given in Sarajevo, <http://www.peshkupauje.com/2010/01/trashegimia-otomane-dhe-komunitetet>, **Peshkupauje**, [28.04.2019]; Joshua W. Walker, Nathalie Tocci, Ronald Linden, "Getting to ZERO Turkey, Its Neighbors and the West", **Transatlantic Academy**, (2009): 12.

⁶ Yigal Schleifer, "Turkey's Neo-Ottoman Problem", **World Politics Review**, 16.02.2010, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/5125/turkeys-neo-ottoman-problem>, [23.11.2019].

emergence of a threat to national security both internally and externally, reduced Turkey's ambitions for regional protagonism. The Arab Spring in the Middle East, the refugee crisis, the emergence of terrorist organizations such as ISIS, YPG / PYD and the struggle with the FETÖ network, were issues that Turkey needed to resolve.

In parallel, faced with the threat of national security, within the JDP, during the last stage of Ahmet Davutoğlu as prime minister, differences appeared between him and President Erdoğan openly. Both, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu had different views on key fields of policymaking, such as the economy, the pre-trial imprisonment of academics and journalists, the legislation that was related to the corruption, the deal that championed Davutoğlu with the EU with which Turkey would secure Europe's support in tackling with the one of the biggest humanitarian challenge in the recent time, while also setting Turkey on track towards visa liberalization with Europe. A culmination rift between Erdoğan and Davutoğlu happened when the JDP executive board took the authorities from Davutoğlu regarding with the appointment of provincial party leaders when he paid a visit to Qatar in the capacity of Prime Minister. Following this event, Davutoğlu resigned from the post of Prime Minister, thus paving the way for the latest phase of Turkey's foreign policy.⁷

The fourth period of Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkan countries is considered to begin in 2016. Ahmet Davutoğlu's resignation from the post of Prime Minister in May 2016, and the security challenges, especially the coup attempt orchestrated by Fethullah Gülen's network (FETÖ) forced Turkey to reset its priorities within foreign policy.

Generally, two elements characterize the most recent period of Turkish foreign policy: The first is related with the strengthening of Erdoğan's position in the state apparatus in general and in foreign policy decision in particular, especially after the transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system in 2018. After the transition to a “strong”

⁷ Constanze Letsch, “Turkish PM Davutoğlu Resigns as President Erdoğan Tightens Grip”, **The Guardian**, 05.05.2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/05/ahmet-davutoglus-future-turkish-prime-minister-balance>; Kemal Kirişçi, “Why is Turkey’s Davutoğlu Getting Skewered by his own Party for the EU Migrant Deal?”, **Brookings**, 05.05.2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/05/05/why-is-turkeys-davutoglu-getting-skewered-by-his-own-party-for-the-eu-migrant-deal/>, [02.03.2021].

presidential system, the decision-making in the foreign policy has been concentrated in the hands of the president and in his most trusted people.⁸ Whereas the state institutions that in the past were key setters of foreign policy like the the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Armed Forces and the National Security Council, mostly were left aside and in the shadow regarding with respect to process of decision-making.⁹ As for the cultivation of relations with the countries of the Western Balkans, Erdoğan has preferred to cultivate these relations in the framework of personal relations that he has built with the leaders of these countries.

While the second issue deals with putting security as the foreign policy priority, which was characteristic of Turkish foreign policy of the 1990s. The main priority of Erdoğan's foreign policy in the Western Balkans was the struggle against the FETÖ network. In the struggle against FETÖ, considerable success was achieved precisely in countries such as Serbia, Albania or Kosovo, where Erdoğan has personal relations with their leaders. But it should also be noted that in addition to the struggle against FETÖ, Turkey continued to keep active the other elements mentioned above, which gave dynamics to its foreign policy during the first two decades of the 21st century.

1.2 Main Research Question / Hypotheses and Methodology

It is worth mentioning the fact that the increase of interest in Turkey and its foreign policy from the perspective of the public opinion of the Western Balkan countries stems from the coming to power of the JDP. This is underscored by the numerous scientific publications, master's and doctoral theses, journals, television shows, etc., which focus on providing analysis and elaborations on JDP's foreign policy in the Western Balkans. There is a kind of impression that Turkey's presence and activism in the Western Balkans starts with the coming to power of the JDP. The reasons may be of different nature, starting from the level of frequent visits of the JDP leadership in the region, the media impact with special emphasis on social media through which the figure of JDP's leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan is idealized as a perfect model of a leader, personal

⁸ Bulent Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy after 15 July", **Istanbul Policy Center**, (2017): 4.

⁹ Lars Haugom, "Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erdogan: A Change in International Orientation?", **Comparative Strategy**, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2019): 214.

relations established between the leadership of JDP and relevant persons of this region, closer communication between organizations / agencies supported by the Turkish state and the peoples of the Western Balkans, etc. However, in all these attempts to elaborate on Turkey's foreign policy, as if the 1990s are left on the sidelines by not giving the deserved importance and value to this period, which has been critical for the fate of the Balkan region as well for the perspective of Turkey. The presence and role of Turkey in all the crises experienced during the 1990s in this region, as well as after the wars by contributing to the building of regional order by sending military troops in peacekeeping missions, is of particular importance. Hence, the interest of the researcher in this topic, made it possible to raise the main research question for this study which questions that *“Is foreign policy of Turkey under the leadership of the JDP a continuation of the active policy of the 1990s in the Western Balkans?”* The other questions that will be elaborated through this PhD thesis would be: What are the reasons for Turkey's active presence in the Balkans? Were there any changes in terms of priorities and the use of tools in the context of Turkey's foreign policy during the 1990s and after 2002 when the JDP came to power? What is the perception of the public opinion of the Western Balkan countries regarding Turkey's foreign policy?

Meanwhile, the hypotheses of this study can be summarized as follows:

- Since the change of the international system after the Cold War, Turkey has started to develop an active foreign policy in the Western Balkans region. Successive wars in this region endangered the security of free movement of Turkish citizens and businesses, from Turkey through this transit route to Europe. Moreover, the possible flight of a large number of people from these wars to Turkey would cause a refugee crisis, with potential economic and social consequences. In this context, the top priority of Turkish foreign policy during the 1990s in this region was the issue of security of Turkish citizens and businesses passing through this transit route and minimizing the potential refugee crisis that would cause possible economic and social consequences. The two main elements used in this period in the framework of Turkish foreign policy to preserve the security have been diplomacy and military presence in NATO operations and in all post-conflict peacekeeping missions.

- From 2002 to 2008, the main objective of Turkey's foreign policy under the JDP but also to the countries of the Western Balkans was the process of integration into NATO and the EU. Evidence of this have been the official bilateral visits between Turkey and the Western Balkan countries, where among the main topics of the talks has been the Euro-Atlantic perspectives. Moreover, Turkey has consistently been a strong supporter of the integration of Balkan countries into international organizations. This can be best seen from the statements of politicians from the Balkan region.

- After the stagnation of EU integration process and at the same time the arrival of Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2009 as Turkish Foreign Minister, Turkey started to pursue a more independent foreign policy, especially in her close regions. Between 2009-2016, Turkey expanded the range of her presence in Western Balkans through increased economic investments, mediation efforts, active approach of government - related organizations, cultural activities, etc.

- The resignation of Ahmet Davutoğlu from the post of Prime Minister in 2016 and the transition from the parliamentary system to the presidential system, made the decision-making in Turkish foreign policy concentrated in the hands of the president. After the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, the top priority of the Turkish leadership in the Western Balkans was the issue of security. The struggle against FETO's network is evidence of this approach.

In order to answer the main question and confirm the hypotheses of the PhD thesis, qualitative methods have been used namely; content analysis, discourse analysis, interviews, as well as comparative methods.

Having in consideration that the data in this PhD thesis are only text-base, we have decided to use the content analysis as part of the analytical method. The content analysis method is used during the analysis of primary sources such as web-based content from newspapers and governmental and ministerial websites and secondary sources like: books, scientific journals, master's and doctoral theses, biographies, conference proceedings and annual reports. Thus, through the content analysis it will be determined the context and meaning of the analyzed content as precisely as possible. Therefore, in

the extensive research, materials relevant to our research were identified, selected, and analyzed.

Through discourse analysis were analyzed speeches, statements, press conferences, interviews on television and newspapers, of relevant actors regarding Turkey's relations with the Western Balkans. Here we can mostly refer to the statements and interviews of Turkish politicians during the 1990s regarding the crises in the Balkans, the interviews of JDP officials and the speech of Ahmet Davutoğlu in the capacity of foreign minister in Sarajevo in 2009 which in a way gave an overview that how he sees Turkey-Western Balkans relations.

Through the comparison method, in the general context comparisons have been made regarding the periods of Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans in terms of approach and instruments used, while in the specific context are comparisons in terms of statistical data of Turkish economic investments in the Balkans within certain time periods, as well as comparisons of annual reports regarding the activities carried out in the Western Balkan countries by agencies /organizations supported by the Turkish state.

1.3. . Scientific and Intellectual Importance of the PhD thesis

This study aims to contribute to the scientific literature dealing with the field of international relations and political science, which specifically relates to Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans after the Cold War period until nowadays. It is worth mentioning the fact that books, master and PhD theses have been written on this topic so far. The novelty that this PhD thesis will offer to the literature of the field is the time frame for the elaboration of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans from the beginning of the 1990s to 2021. Furthermore, this 30-year period is divided into sub-periods mentioned above, depending in the approach and tools used. More specifically, in the connotation of the scientific importance of the thesis, the author has aimed to achieve two objectives. The first objective concerns with the supplementation with data and information of the sub-topics included in the thesis, which have been worked in other scientific researches in the past. More specifically, this has been realized through the consultation of primary sources from online newspapers, websites of institutions,

official state documents as well as the realization of interviews with persons who are familiar with the topic. And second, to open sub-topics within the main topic that have not been elaborated so far and that will represent a novelty for the scientific literature. Among such sub-topics may be mentioned "Albanian Pyramid Crises and Turkey's Contribution towards Overcoming of the Crisis", "The role of Albanian Community in Turkey during the Kosovo war and its efforts to influence towards Turkish leadership", "Turkey's Diplomatic Position on the Process of the Independence of Kosovo", "Turkey's Request for Change of History Text Books in Kosovo" "Debates over the Involvement of Turkey in Establishment of the Political Subject 'Besa Movement' in Macedonia" as well as the recent development that has to do with "Struggle with FETÖ Network in Western Balkans as a Priority of Erdoğan's Foreign Policy". This PhD thesis has in a way paved the way for young researchers in this field to elaborate any of the mentioned sub-topics even at the level of micro analysis.

By using literature in different languages such as Albanian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish, English and Spanish, the author has managed to achieve the goals regarding the scientific importance of the work.

When it comes to the academic circle of the Western Balkans, it can be said that the volume of academic literature devoted to Turkish foreign policy after Cold War as well as Turkey's short- and medium-term implications for the region is small, i.e. there is a disproportion between literature vis-à-vis the public interest in the topic in question. In this context, regarding the Turkish influence in the Western Balkans region, there is space for analysis and studies to highlight this issue. In addition to the scientific contribution, this PhD thesis will also have its intellectual contribution. This implies that this study, in addition to academic institutions, can also serve the state institutions, namely the foreign ministries and diplomatic missions of the Western Balkans states as well as Turkey, given that this thesis focuses on the reflexes of Turkish foreign policy in the developments of the Western Balkans. Also, providing data on Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans could attract the attention of other international actors present in the region. This thesis can also serve as a reference for the design of strategies

for the Western Balkan countries in the context of the approach towards external actors who want to have their influence in this region.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

In principle, there is a link between changing the structure of the international system and how states determine their foreign policy objectives and then behave according to the circumstances. In modern history this was best demonstrated after the end of the Cold War and the transformation from a bipolar system to a uni-polar system, with the USA as the sole superpower. This change of system also imposed the restructuring of the foreign policies of other states that were part of the bipolar system. This is mostly expressed for middle power states and small states which in the Cold War system had “red lines” of influence and interaction within the framework of foreign policy. The post-Cold War system created space for greater and freer interactivity between states which in the Cold War was impossible as a result of being in opposite blocks. As a result of the change in the structure of the international system, the need for change and adaptation to the new system was imposed.

After the end of the Cold War, to Turkey was open the space for a more active foreign policy with countries in her immediate regions such as Caucasus, the Black Sea, Middle East, the Balkans and the Turkic states of Central Asia. Only when the bipolar system was extinguished, medium-sized powers such as Turkey managed to adopt an active multidimensional and multidirectional foreign policy.¹⁰

This change or adaptation of the foreign policy of the states as a result of the change of the structure of the system is best explained by Structural Realism. The determinant variable emphasized by Structural Realism is the polarity of the international system, defined in the context of the distribution of material capabilities between states. This conclusion has emerged from the specification of Structural Realism theory.¹¹

¹⁰ Emirhan Göral, “Değişen Uluslararası Sistemde Türkiye'nin Balkan Politikasının Türkiye - Avrupa Birliği İlişkilerine Etkisi”, **Marmara Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2013): 108.

¹¹ Ewan Harrison, **The Post-Cold War International System, Strategies, Institutions and Reflexivity** (London & New York : Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2004), 30.

The doyen of Structural Realism - Kenneth Waltz noticeably make the difference between the structure of domestic and international systems. For Waltz, “domestic political systems are centralized and hierarchical with having governmental institutions and offices, while the structure of the international system is anarchic due to the absence of a government.” This means that there is “no centralized authority or ultimate arbiter that stands above states”.¹² Due to its anarchic organization, the international system becomes a self-help one and a balance of power will happen as a result of the attempts of states to reach the security.¹³ This balance “will reflect a structural equilibrium in the distribution of capabilities within the international system”.¹⁴

Waltz also says that, “State units of an international system are distinguished primarily by their greater or lesser capabilities for performing similar tasks. The structure of a system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities across the system’s units”.¹⁵ This is to say, “international system change when great powers rise and fall and the balance of power shifts accordingly”.¹⁶

Regarding the polarity of the international system, it is worth noting that it is “determined by examining the ‘distribution of capabilities’ across units, at any time”.¹⁷ This point of view provides the opportunity to typify the nature of the international system. In general, a distinction is made between three types of polarity: uni-polarity, bipolarity and multi-polarity.¹⁸

Uni-polarity comes into expression when a single state in the international system is noticeably superior, i.e. when a state possess the power needed which without doubts position it in a separate rank compared to all other countries in the system.

According to Waltz:

¹² Kenneth Waltz, **Theory of International Politics** (Addison-Wesley, 1979), 88.

¹³ **Ibid.**

¹⁴ Harrison, **The Post-Cold War International System**, 30.

¹⁵ Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, 97.

¹⁶ Robert Jackson, Georg Sørensen, **Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches - Fifth Edition** (Oxford University Press, 2013), 80.

¹⁷ Elif Dibek, “What are the Basic Concepts of Neorealism?”, **Researchgate**, https://www.researchgate.net/post/What_are_the_basic_concepts_of_neorealism, [25.02.2021].

¹⁸ **Ibid.**

“Polar actor is a state that meets two conditions. The first is that the state must possess considerable level of resources or opportunities to realize its objectives. The second condition is related with exceeding other states in every element of state capacity such as the size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability, and competence. So, the uni-polar system is the system, whose structure is defined by the fact that just one state fulfills these criteria.”¹⁹

Bipolarity can be defined as a system where the distribution of power is such way that only two superpowers have the biggest influence on politics, economy, military, security and so on. The pure example of a bipolar world in modern history is the period of the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union. The two states were the dominators of the international system for more than forty years during the second half of the XX century, having their spheres of political, economical, ideological, and military influence.²⁰

While a multi-polar international system is considered when more than two actors have almost similar capacities in the context of political, military, economic, technological and cultural power. In a multi-polar international system there should be at least three actors to dominate the system in order to be termed as a multi-polar system.²¹

As indicated, the countries that have determinant role for defining changes in the structure of the international system are the great powers. Waltz is of the opinion that that the bipolar system during the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union is more stable and provides a better guarantee of peace, stability and security than do multi-polar systems.²² According to Waltz:

“Smaller systems are more stable, and their members are better able to manage affairs for their mutual benefit. Stable systems are self-reinforcing, because understanding others' behavior, making agreements with them, and policing the agreements become easier through continued experience.”²³

While for the multi-polar systems Waltz says that competition is more complicated comparing with bipolar system. This attitude can be seen in Waltz's words when he emphasizes that: “Uncertainties about the comparative capabilities of states multiply as

¹⁹ Alida Tomja, “Polarity and International System Consequences”, **Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Development**, Vol. 1, No.1 (2014): 58.

²⁰ **Ibid.**

²¹ **Ibid.**

²² Jackson, Sørensen, **Introduction to International Relations Theories**, 80.

²³ Waltz, **Theory of International Politics**, 136.

numbers grow, and because estimates of the cohesiveness and strength of coalitions are difficult to make.”²⁴

While regarding the uni-polar system, according to Waltz and other scholars that belong to the school of structural realism, uni-polarity cannot last too long, because rising great powers will be compelled to balance against the sole great power. George Sorensen emphasize that:

“Structural realist argumentation dictates that other states will balance against the sole great power because balancing the great power means guaranteeing your one’s own security. Such balancing will eventually lead to the exposure of new great powers in a multi-polar system.”²⁵

In this context, the first two decades of the post-Cold War period were dominated by the USA as the sole superpower of the international system. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the USA has been considered as the militarily, economically, culturally and technologically leading state of the world without any competitor, a sole superpower that was in position to impose its will on another state. As one of the great powers during the Cold War, and as a sole superpower in the first two decades after the Cold War, the USA played a determinant role in the construction of the new international world order. Viewed from an economic perspective, the USA played a determinant role in promoting and expanding of the global liberal economic order even before the uni-polar era, supporting the Bretton Woods system, the World Trade Organization, having impact in the institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.²⁶ Furthermore, the USA tried to shape and protect the world order also politically. After the collapse of Soviet Union the USA was the driving force in the process of democratizing the countries emerging from the communist bloc. To this day, through numerous funded projects, it strongly supports democratization as a reference value of the West.²⁷ In a word, from the beginning of 1990 until 2008 when the world faced the global economic crisis, the USA as a leading superpower of the international system

²⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War”, **International Security**, Vol. 25, No. 1(Summer, 2000): 5-6.

²⁵ Georg Sørensen, “Big and Important Things’ in IR: Structural Realism and the Neglect of Changes in Statehood”, **International Relations**, Vol. 23, No. 2 (June 2009): 226.

²⁶ Andrea Edoardo Varisco, “Towards a Multi-Polar International System: Which Prospects for Global Peace?”, **E-International Relations**, June 2013, <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/06/03/towards-a-multi-polar-international-system-which-prospects-for-global-peace/>, [25.02.2021].

²⁷ **Ibid.**

accompanied by European states, allies in NATO at the same time, led international politics. These twenty years were the momentum of the 'liberal international order'.

Turkey's foreign policy performance since the early 1990s, characterized by coalition governments, and continuing with the first phase of JDP governance which is considered to be until 2009, can be interpreted as Turkey's attempt to adjust to the external developments taking place at international and regional levels. During this period the external environment can be read as a 'set of constraints and opportunities', which in one hand helped the ruling elites to realize their goals in the domestic politics but on the other hand had a impact in defining the priorities and behaviors of Turkey's foreign policy. In this context, Tarık Oğuzlu says that: "Turkey's foreign policy choices have closely varied with the changing dynamics of polarity at systemic and regional levels, as well as with evolving views on the legitimacy of the US-led liberal international order."²⁸

Taking away the internal motivations to accelerate the national Europeanization by the Turkish politicians during the 1990'ties and after 2002 when JDP came to power, Turkey's impression of international order was that Western supremacy in world politics was unquestionable. Taking into consideration the uni-polar world order lead by USA, Turkish decision makers alleged that the liberal democratic values practiced and promoted by the western international community would resolve in the most appropriate way Turkey's economic, social, political and security issues.²⁹

In fact, aligning Turkey with the West, more specifically maintaining good relations with the USA as the sole superpower, was in the interest of the Turkish leadership on the one hand, but on the other hand for the USA, Turkey was a determining factor³⁰ in

²⁸ H. Tarık Oğuzlu, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order", *All Azimuth* Vol. 9, No. 1 (2020): 127-128.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 132.

³⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski a political scientist who served as a adviser to President Lyndon B. Johnson from 1966 to 1968 and as a National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter's from 1977 to 1981 described the weight and relevance of Turkey in the post-Cold War period as an relevant geopolitical pivot saying that "Turkey stabilizes the Black Sea region, controls access from it to the Mediterranean Sea, balances Russia in the Caucasus, still offers an antidote to Muslim fundamentalism, and serves as the southern anchor for NATO". Emre Erşen, "Rise of new centres of power in Eurasia: Implications for Turkish foreign policy", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol.5, No.2 (2014): 188; Meanwhile, Marc Grossman, the USA ambassador to Turkey between 1995-1997, has emphasized that: "Turkey lives in a neighborhood

fulfilling the vacuum that was created by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and emergence of new independent countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. USA needed a partnership with Turkey in order to have more influence in the regions such as Middle East, Caucasus, Black Sea and the Balkans. A hypothetical come back of Russian domination can create negative impact to American interests.³¹ In this regard, during the visit of Turkey's Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's to Washington in February 1992, President of USA George Bush said: "Turkey is indeed a friend, a partner of the United States, and it's also a model to others, especially those newly independent republics of Central Asia."³² Bush alluded to the relationship between two countries as an "enhanced partnership".³³

The relationship between the USA and Turkey during post-Cold War era can be evaluate as a relation between a superpower and a regional power. A regional power like Turkey had to take into consideration the policies of USA as superpower's while implementing her foreign policy. This estimated to be determinant factor for a regional power whose capacity and impact are much more smaller in comparison with those of the superpower, arising from its lesser potential to influence the system.³⁴

In this context, during the first two decades of post-Cold War period, Turkey's foreign policy choices almost always were in the line with structural realist expectations. Apart in the regions mentioned above, Turkey followed a pro USA / pro-Western foreign policy also in the Balkans, not just because it was convenient to political goals of the ruling elites, but also because the powerful legitimacy of the USA-led liberal order did not create space to Turkey to pursue any other alternative.³⁵ Concrete examples how Turkey pursued USA foreign policy in the Balkans are the positioning on the same side during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, recognizing the independence of the new

that is a 360 degrees challenge and Turkey's place has changed from being a 'wing' state to a 'front' state for Europe and the USA". Meltem Müftüler Baç, "Turkey's Predicament in the Post-Cold War Era", **Pergamon**, Vol. 28, No. 3. (1996): 256.

³¹ Önder Çakır, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Era" (PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham Department of Political Science and International Studies, 2014), 135-136.

³² "Human Rights Watch World Report 1993 – Turkey", **Refworld**, 01.01.1993, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca705f.html>, [15.05.2021].

³³ **Ibid.**

³⁴ Çakır, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War", 136-137.

³⁵ Oğuzlu, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World", 128.

states, advocating for the Balkan countries for NATO integration, lobbying for the independence of the Kosovo, etc.

The outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008 hit the USA and the European Union economies hard. In this situation, the USA but also EU states began to concentrate their efforts and capital on resolving the economic and social issues at home, while on the other hand reducing their external engagement in promoting liberal democracy values.³⁶

While the USA but also EU countries were facing with the economic downturn, the rising powers in international politics have on the whole survived the crisis.³⁷ Moreover, the immense actions by the new emerging actors particularly China and Russia, in the field of economy, military, culture etc, have reinforced the argument of transition of the world order from unipolarity to multipolarity.³⁸ According to SIPRI's³⁹ data, "China has increased its military spending by 170 percent in real terms since 2002, and by more than 500 per cent since 1995. Chinese military spending in 2011 was \$143 billion, the second highest in the world."⁴⁰ In addition to growing in the military segment, China is also leading the way in artificial intelligence systems, genetic engineering and IT revolutionary solutions. China, as an alternative to NATO, established the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and developed the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank as an alternative to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.⁴¹ Meanwhile, immediately after the USA and China, Russia ranks as the third largest military spender. Despite the global financial crisis of 2008, Russia has increased military spendings by

³⁶ *Ibid*, 134.

³⁷ Pinar Tank, "The Concept of "Rising Powers", **NOREF Policy Brief** (June 2012): 3.

³⁸ Muhammad Muzaffar, Zahid Yaseen, Nazim Rahim, "Changing Dynamics of Global Politics: Transition from Unipolar to Multipolar World", **Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal**, Vol. 1, No. 1 (June 2017): 58.

³⁹ "SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public. Based in Stockholm, SIPRI is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide", <https://www.sipri.org/about>, [26.02.2021].

⁴⁰ "Military Expenditure Trends", **Vrede**, 19.11.2012, <https://www.vrede.be/nieuws/military-expenditure-trends#:~:text=China%20has%20increased%20its%20military,second%20highest%20in%20the%20world>, [25.02.2021].

⁴¹ Radovan Spiridonov, "Luftë për më Tepër Miq në Botën Multi-Polare", **Respublica**, 30.04.2019, <https://respublica.edu.mk/sq/blog/luft-per-me-teper-miq-ne-boten-multi-polare>, [26.02.2021].

16 % since 2008, including a 9.3 % increase in 2011.⁴² Furthermore, the global warming can be "used" by Russia to exploit its natural resources in Siberia, "getting in this way new power capabilities which could be used to challenge US supremacy".⁴³ In short, the two decades of USA supremacy followed by European countries, after the global financial crisis began to be challenged by growing countries like China and Russia and followed by other regional powers such as Japan, India, Brazil, Turkey, Iran, etc., which are taking an increasingly important place on the big chessboard. Another aspect of challenging USA supremacy by growing powers is the incorporation of identical policies that provide their visibility, power and prestige at the international arena. Some of the policies that the growing powers are practising are the multidimensional foreign policy approach, good neighborhood policies, importance given to development assistance to the more visible presence in the international organizations, etc.⁴⁴ In the symbolic context, on earth more suns are already shining. This is implying that current international system is being characterized by an eroding unipolar order, and that growing powers are playing important role in international economic, political and security issues.⁴⁵ Even at certain moments, the emergence of the multipolar system is also recognized by the statements of the US leadership.⁴⁶ In this regard Yet Ikenberry stressed that: "The old order dominated by the United States and Europe is giving way to one increasingly shared with non-Western rising states."⁴⁷

In this context, based on the Waltz's own words, structural change have impact on the way of acting of states and in the outcomes that are produced as a result of their interactions.⁴⁸ This means that when international order shifts from unipolarity to multipolarity, the maneuver space of countries, especially of middle and small powers, increases. The period of transition provide to the states more flexibility and more space

⁴² "Military Expenditure Trends", [25.02.2021].

⁴³ Varisco, "Towards a Multi-Polar International System", [25.02.2021].

⁴⁴ Tarık Oğuzlu, Emel Parlar Dal, "Decoding Turkey's Rise: An Introduction", **Turkish Studies**, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2013): 625.

⁴⁵ Şaban Kardaş, "Turkey: A Regional Power Facing a Changing International System", **Turkish Studies**, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2013): 638

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Dickinson, "New Order: How 'The Multipolar World' Came to be", **Foreign Policy**, 15.10.2009, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/15/new-order/>, [26.02.2021].

⁴⁷ Constance Duncombe, Tim Dunne, "After Liberal World Order", **International Affairs**, Vol. 94, No. 1 (2018): 28.

⁴⁸ Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", 39.

for activism in their foreign policies. In a situation when the primacy of an existing single superpower is challenged by rising powers, maneuvering opportunities of regional powers like Turkey are more likely.⁴⁹ If we translate this in practical terms, it will be seen that Turkey from 2009 under the leadership of the JDP began to develop a more active and independent foreign policy in Turkey close regions, among them, the Balkan region. After this period, when the emergence of the multipolar system was coming to the fore, Turkey felt that there was a space to implement its strategies in order to become an actor of global relevance in the near future. Thus, Turkey increased the intensity of its presence and influence through elements such as economic investments, mediation attempts, active access of Turkish official agencies / organizations, civil society, cultural activities, etc, as well as in certain situations the use of diplomatic pressure to achieve her goals. The most prominent examples of independent initiatives are the establishment of a tripartite mechanism between Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the attempt to mediate in the issue of Islamic Communities in the Region of Sandžak (Serbia), the development of numerous projects through the organizations of support from the Turkish state, diplomatic pressure to close the institutions of the FETÖ network and the extradition of its members from the countries of the Western Balkans, etc.

The period of Turkish foreign policy after 2009, some scholars interpret it from the lenses of neoclassical realism which alludes that in the decision-making process in foreign policy in addition to the influence of “systemic variables such as the distribution of power capabilities among states the perception and misperception of systemic pressures, or other states' intention”, also have impact the domestic variables which may be state institutions, elites or societal actors. So, neoclassical realism go step further comparing to other schools of international relations theory because it gives “priority to systemic variables and posits an important intervening role for domestic variables.”⁵⁰ This means after 2009, were not only external developments that encouraged Turkey to have more active engagement in her close regions such as Caucasus, Middle East, Black Sea and Western Balkans, but also domestic transformations create the space for the

⁴⁹ Oğuzlu, “Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order”, 129.

⁵⁰ Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell “The State of Neoclassical Realism”, **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 298.

country to follow an active foreign policy. The period in which Turkey found new opportunities for an active approach in its neighbouring regions, the domestic environment gradually became more and more appropriate to do the most of the changes at the international level.⁵¹

As stated earlier, after the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, the systematic pressure on Turkey diminished. The USA as a superpower, followed by EU countries felt the need to consolidate their economy, while on the other hand the growing powers with their economic, military, cultural, etc. consolidation, increasingly reinforced the argument for the emergence of the multipolar system. This led Turkey to implement more autonomous policies.

With the erosion of external pressure, JDP focused its power on internal policies. The process of strengthening the JDP's power began with the election of Abdullah Gül as president in 2007, continuing with the constitutional referendum in 2010 and the most decisive moment were the legislative elections in 2011 where the JDP won for a third time consecutively. In these circumstances, Erdoğan's power within the JDP became indisputable, while the JDP became the dominant party. Therefore, JDP did not have only less systemic pressure but also less domestic pressure to follow its own agenda. Taking into consideration this circumstances, the leadership of JDP felt the opportunity to realize their foreign policy platform, which mostly was developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu (who was in different positions such as chief foreign policy advisor to prime minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Prime Minister) and realized by Erdoğan.⁵² The JDP foreign policy agenda was mainly based on the concept of "Strategic Depth" which emphasized the importance of the Ottoman heritage in the neighboring regions of Turkey that in the past were part of the Ottoman Empire.⁵³

⁵¹ Goktug Sonmez, "The Interplay between International and Domestic Factors in Turkey's Grand Strategy-Making: Activism, Disappointment, and Readjustment" (PhD thesis, University of London Department of Politics and International Studies, 2016), 37.

⁵² Mehmet Şahin, "Theorizing the Change: A Neoclassical Realist Approach to Turkish Foreign Policy", **Contemporary Review of the Middle East**, Vol. 7, Issue 4 (December 2020): 494

⁵³ When referring to the neighboring regions the word is for the Middle East, Caucasus and the Balkans, which Davutoğlu considers that are Turkey's near-land basin. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey is an indivisible part of this regions based on both her historical experience as well as her geographic position. Turkey's political, economic and cultural affiliation in the international context will be dependent on the influence and effectiveness that it will have in these regions. Davutoğlu further points out that an

Despite Davutoğlu's resignation as Prime Minister in 2016, the concept he envisioned has not been replaced with an alternative approach. But what changed was the decision-making in foreign policy which was even more concentrated in the hands of the president Erdoğan.⁵⁴

Therefore, from the prism of neo-classical realism it can be said that: “Turkey’s changing approach in foreign policy is driven by less external pressure compared to the previous periods.”⁵⁵ Since the JDP’s governance power has been strengthened after 2009, it can run her policy as the state's foreign policy to some extent. In this circumstances, Turkey now it seeks for a more autonomous foreign policy in her close regions rather than intersecting her interests with the Western powers.⁵⁶

1.5. Collection of Data

Primary Sources

- **Interviews**

When it comes to finding primary sources, interviewing is a commonly used tool in social sciences. In the framework of this PhD thesis, through semi-structured interviews, a set of questions were asked during each interview. It should be noted that this form of interview also gives the researcher the freedom to ask additional questions if an interesting line of exploration happen during the interview process. Additionally semi-structured interview offers comfort to conduct a discussion into details on a particular topic, about which the interviewee has in-depth knowledge.

Interviews were conducted with Prof. Dr. Vlado Bučkovski, former Minister of Defense and Prime Minister of Macedonia, Antonio Milošoski, former Government Spokesman, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Member of Parliament, and Prof. Dr. Stevo Pendarovski former Spokesman of President and current President of Macedonia,

Anatolian country that has no influence over her immediate regions such as the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East will not be able to maintain her presence in this geopolitical field, nor can it be opened to the world. Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Thellësia Strategjike - Pozita Ndërkombëtare e Turqisë*. Trs. Mithat Hoxha (Shkup:Logos-A, 2009), 157.

⁵⁴ Şahin, “Theorizing the Change: A Neoclassical Realist”, 494.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 499.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

as well as with Qamil Bityqi, director of the Kosovo Cultural Center in Istanbul. With the first three interviewees, the discussion generally focused on the relations between Turkey and the Western Balkans, while in particular the relations between Macedonia and Turkey were discussed. Even with Mr. Bityqi the interview was conducted in this direction, giving greater focus to the relations between Turkey and Kosovo, as well as the impact of the Albanian community in Turkey, with special emphasis during the Kosovo war in 1998-1999.

A note on anonymous interviews must be added. In the framework of this PhD thesis, six additional interviews were conducted with students from six Western Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania) regarding their perceptions of "Turkey Scholarship" program in the context of the benefits, the positive aspects of the program as well as the aspects that need to be improved. The students that consented to interviews, asked to remain anonymous.

It is worth mentioning the fact that through the conducted interviews it has been achieved to supplement the existing literature with new information. The persons interviewed have had access to previously unpublished data. This is especially comes into expression for the politicians who have been in high state positions who shared their personal experiences as protagonists in the relations with Turkey.

- **Online data from media agencies, daily newspapers, institution web sites and video materials**

Primary sources are also complimented by information received from the media which has been an important source to fill the academic gap. Information provided online by relevant media agencies such as Reuters, Anadolu Agency, Radio Free Europe, Balkan Insight, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), Deutsche Welle, daily newspapers such as Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, The Guardian, Washington Post, New York Times as well as local Macedonian, Albanian, Montenegrin, Bosnian and Serbian media outlets have helped provide information for the sub-topics elaborated within the PhD thesis. The data obtained from the websites of various state institutions of Turkey and the Western Balkan countries, as well as the

annual reports documenting the activities, projects and finances of the institutions and organizations that have been the subject of the study, are also used in the work. Lastly, within the primary sources, the author has also used video materials from the Youtube platform, in the framework of which are provided information regarding Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans.

- **Secondary Sources**

Previous academic research on the same topic has also been used as a secondary source. This includes resources such as books, journal articles, Master and PhD thesis, policy papers, conference proceedings etc. The secondary literature is consulted in providing data first on Turkey's foreign policy in general, then in particular on Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans since the early 1990s to the present, as well as on developments in the region of the Western Balkans, including successive conflicts during the 1990s and other developments after 2000. To provide secondary literature, libraries have been visited in Turkey, specifically in Istanbul (as a result of the author's stay for PhD studies in this city), as well as in Macedonia and Kosovo. It is also worth mentioning the consultation of online libraries such as Z-Library (<https://en.ug1lib.org/>) and Library Genesis (<http://libgen.rs/>) which offer a large number of scholarly journal articles, academic and general-interest books and magazines in the field of international relations.

1.6. Literature Review

In order to achieve the goals of this PhD thesis, a number of scientific pieces of work such as books, PhD and Master thesis, journal articles, conference proceedings etc., that have offered a good insight into the Turkish Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans have been reviewed.

Among them, The three volumes of *Turkish Foreign Policy* (In Turkish: *Türk Dış Politikası – Cilt 1 (1919-1980) Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*;⁵⁷ *Türk Dış Politikası - Cilt 2 (1980-2001) Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne*

⁵⁷ Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* (Cilt I · 1919-1980), (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009).

Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar;⁵⁸ Türk Dış Politikası - Cilt 3 (2001-2012) Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler,Yorumlar⁵⁹) edited by Turkish scholar Baskin Oran, which is considered to be a unique extensive piece of work that covers Turkish foreign policy from the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1919 until 2012. It examines nearly all major issues, factors, and interactions, of a time frame of approximately ninety years. The subtopic within this extensive work is also the Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkan region, which provides an overview on the reflexes of Turkey on the developments in this region from 1919 to 2012. It should be noted that at the bibliography of these three volumes of Turkish Foreign Policy, especially the parts related to the Balkan region, mainly is used literature in Turkish and partly in English. It can be said that there is a lack of perspective of scholars from the Balkan region regarding Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans. The use of local literature by Balkan authors would compliment this classic textbook in Turkey.

The book “*Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000 - third edition*”⁶⁰ by William Hale is an academic work which gives an overview of the diplomatic connotation of Turkey from the period of the Ottoman Empire (1774) to the year 2010 where JDP leads Turkey. The book is conceived of 12 chapters. In the chapter 9 the author analyzes Turkey's approach to the Balkan region since the 1990s, namely relations with Greece with particular emphasis on the Cyprus issue as well as the active approach of Turkish diplomacy in efforts to help resolve the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo. The author also provides an overview of Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans even after 2002 where the JDP increased the intensity of cooperation with the countries of this region through diplomatic, economic, cultural and other activities. This book is among those books that can serve as a starting point for scholars who want to elaborate on a particular issue of Turkish foreign policy. In a word, the author in this book provides general information on the main developments within a region and within a certain time frame. For example, in the Balkan region during the 1990's the author mainly is focused on Turkish foreign

⁵⁸ Baskin Oran (ed.), **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler,Yorumlar (Cilt II • 1980-2001)** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010).

⁵⁹ Baskin Oran (ed.), **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler,Yorumlar(Cilt III • 2001-2013)** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013).

⁶⁰ William Hale, **Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774 3rd Edition** (London & New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013).

policy reflections on the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, as two central developments of the time, leaving aside other developments in which Turkey had an active participation. The same applies to the period 2002-2010, which mentions Turkey's accession during the independence of Montenegro in 2006 and Kosovo in 2008, as well as the initiation of a trilateral mechanism by Turkish diplomacy between Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also in this book lacks the perspective of local authors from the Balkans. The author has mainly consulted literature in the English language.

*“Strategic Depth”*⁶¹ book written by Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2001, is considered to be the JDP foreign policy guide. Davutoğlu in this book tries to emphasize the importance of the favorable geographical position of Turkey, which is located in the center of the north-south and west-east axes, and its political-cultural heritage of the imperial type. These two factors are considered to make Turkey a first-rate actor on the international stage. Davutoğlu considers that while in the bipolar system during the Cold War it was impossible to develop an autonomous foreign policy, in the post-Cold War period Turkey has the obligation to re-establish its identity, but also to define the borders of its sphere of influence especially in its neighboring regions. In the *Strategic Depth* he also discusses the importance of the Balkan region, what are the reasons that Turkey should be present in this region and what are the main strategies that Turkey should follow if it wants to achieve its foreign policy goals. Overall, the *Strategic Depth* can be considered as a reference for the implementation of JDP foreign policy. The author in this book presents the theoretical aspect or in a simpler language the "concept on paper" of how foreign policy of Turkey should be developed. This theoretical part, scholars dealing with Turkey's foreign policy can take as a reference to make a comparison with the implementation of JDP foreign policy after 2002. So far, Davutoğlu has not made any academic reflection on how successful the concept of Strategic Depth was, what were its shortcomings, and how Turkish foreign policy should develop in the future.

⁶¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, **Thellësia Strategjike- Pozita Ndërekombëtare e Turqisë**. Trs.Mithat Hoxha (Shkup:Logos-A, 2009).

* *Strategic Depth* book in addition to being translated into Albanian, has also been translated into other local Balkan languages such as Serbian and Macedonian.(In Serbian) - Ахмет Давутоглу, **Стратегијска дубина: међународни положај Турске**. trs. Senka Ivoshevich Ipek (Београд: Службени гласник, 2014). (In Macedonian) – Ahmet Davutoglu, **Стратешка Длабочина: меѓународна положба на Турција**. trs. Muarem Jusufovski, Zeki Jusufovski (Скопје: Табернакул, 2013).

The PhD thesis *"Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era: Diplomatic / Political, Economic and Military Relations"*⁶² by Didem Ekinçi offers a broad elaboration on Turkey's political, diplomatic, economic and military relations towards the Balkan states region, from the post-Cold War period to 2009. The author analyzes under what conditions Turkey's relations towards the region have been formed after the Cold War and how these relations displayed continuity or disruptions during this timeframe. This PhD thesis can serve in the elaboration of Turkey's bilateral relations with the Balkan countries in the diplomatic, economic and military segment from the post-Cold War period until 2009. Even in this PhD thesis, although the central focus is Turkish foreign policy in the Balkan region, the sources used have mainly been in Turkish and English. There is a lack of local sources from the Balkan countries, that would have completed this academic work.

The PhD thesis *"Turkey's Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East, the Balkans and the European Union at the Beginning of the XXI Century, through the Prism by Turkish-American relations"* (In Macedonian: Надворешната политика на Турција кон Блискиот исток, Балканот и Европската унија на почетокот на XXI век, низ призмата на турско-американските односи)⁶³ by Muhamed Ali, analyzes the impact of Turkish-American relations on Turkish diplomacy in the Balkans which can be considered as one of the most important segments of this PhD thesis. According to the author, Turkey's proactive foreign policy towards the Balkans after the Cold War, especially the beginning of the 21st century, is in harmony with the USA foreign policy towards this region. Namely, Turkey, like the USA, is committed to a peaceful and stable region, where dialogue and cooperation between countries are encouraged. To achieve this goal, both states, support the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkan states. This PhD thesis can serve as a reference in the context of how Turkey as a regional power and the USA as a superpower have had a convergent foreign policy during the first two decades after the Cold War in the Balkan region. The master thesis *"Turkish*

⁶² Didem Ekinçi, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era: Diplomatic/Political, Economic and Military Relations" (PhD thesis, Bilkent University Department of International Relations, April 2009).

⁶³ Muhamed Ali, "Надворешна Политика на Турција кон Блискиот Исток, Балканот и Европската Унија на Почетокот на XXI низ Призмата на Турско-Американските Односи", (PhD thesis, University of Cyril and Methodic Faculty of Law – Iustinianus the first, Skopje, 2012).

Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: The influence of traditional determinants on Davutoğlu's conception of Turkey - Balkan Relations"⁶⁴ by Marija Mitrovic, analyzes Ahmet Davutoğlu's Strategic Depth doctrine in the context of geopolitical imagination and the discourse of Ottoman legacy in the Balkans, and how much the implementation of Turkey's foreign policy has been expressed vis-à-vis its previously expressed theoretical vision. In the background, the author also gives a retrospective of the most important developments in the Turkey-Balkans relationship since the establishment of Turkey as a republic.

An article published in the Center for Strategic Research in 2011 entitled "*A Forward Looking Vision for the Balkans*"⁶⁵ by Ahmet Davutoğlu, in the context of the 15th anniversary of the SEECP (South East European Cooperation Process) gives a visionary conception of how Balkan countries, including Turkey can re-establish common points of cooperation in a spirit of joint action in the economic, cultural and political fields, by dropping the not-so-glorious past decades and answering the new challenges of the future decades. Davutoğlu bases this form of cooperation on the basis of methodological and political principles.

Policy Brief "*From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's role in the Western Balkans*"⁶⁶ by Asli Aydintaşbaş, provides an overview of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans region since 2002 in the context of what Turkey is doing in the region and what are the basic objectives on this region. The author highlights three different phases of Western Balkans policy of Turkey under JDP, namely the first phase named as an ongoing Atlanticism which is expressed in the first years of the JDP government until the arrival of Ahmet Davutoğlu as Foreign Minister in 2009, who emphasized that Turkey has the capacities for leading an independent and more active foreign policy in the neighboring regions of Turkey, which scholars interpret as a second phase by calling the Neo-Ottoman approach. While the third and most recent phase of JDP foreign policy

⁶⁴ Marija Mitrovic, "Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: The Influence of Traditional Determinants on Davutoğlu's Conception of Turkey - Balkan Relations", (Master thesis, University of Berlin Department of Social Sciences, 2014).

⁶⁵ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Nje Vizion Drejt te Ardhmes per Ballkanin", **Center for Strategic Research**, No. 1 (October 2011): 1-13.

⁶⁶ Asli Aydintaşbaş, "From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans", **Policy brief of European Council on Foreign Relations** (March 2019): 1-30.

in the Western Balkans the author names as a period of Erdoganism, following the resignation of Ahmet Davutoğlu as prime minister in 2016 and the full concentration of foreign policy decision-making by President Erdoğan. It should be noted that our PhD thesis makes a similar periodization of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans, including the period of the 1990s.

The book *War in the Balkans, (1991-2002)*⁶⁷ by R. Craig Nation provides a comprehensive and detailed elaboration on the successive conflicts in the former Yugoslavia starting with the wars in Slovenia and Croatia to continue with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. In addition to elaborating on the reasons for the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation, the emergence of conflicts and the consequences caused, the book also includes the role of the western international community led by the USA and its most important European allies which were committed in open-ended commitment to peace enforcement, conflict resolution, and peace-building in the Balkans. Similar to this book, scientific contribution to the elaboration of the wars in the former Yugoslavia have also given Robert M Hayden with the book *From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans: Studies of a European Disunion, 1991-2011*,⁶⁸ Finlan Alastair with the book *The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991–1999*,⁶⁹ Isak Sherifi with the PhD thesis “*Political-Diplomatic Developments in the Former -Yugoslavia with special emphasis on Kosovo and Macedonia 1981-2008* (In Albanian: “Zhvillimet Politiko-Diplomatike në Ish-Jugosllavi me theks të veçantë në Kosovë dhe Maqedoni 1981-2008”⁷⁰).

Other scientific works that have contributed in this field but with a more specific approach i.e. analyzing Turkey's bilateral relations with a certain country from the Western Balkans, or Turkey's approach to a certain issue in the region can be distinguished the research papers of Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun's such as “*The Policies of Ankara and Berlin towards the Bosnian War: A Comparative Analysis*” (In Turkish: “Ankara ve Berlin’in Bosna Savaşı’na Yönelik Politikaları: Karşılaştırmalı Bir

⁶⁷ R. Craig Nation, **War in the Balkans: 1991-2002** (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2003).

⁶⁸ Robert M Hayden, **From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans: Studies of a European Disunion, 1991–2011** (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2013).

⁶⁹ Finlan Alastair, **The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991–1999** (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004).

⁷⁰ Isak Sherifi, “Zhvillimet Politiko-Diplomatike në Ish-Jugosllavi me theks të veçantë Kosova dhe Maqedonia 1981-2008” (PhD thesis, Universiteti i Tiranës Instituti i Studimeve Evropiane, 2013).

İnceleme);⁷¹ "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War (1992-1995): A Constructivist Analysis";⁷² Turkish foreign policy towards the issue of Kosovo independence (1990-2008) (In Turkish: Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası (1990-2008));⁷³ Fuat Aksu's research paper, "Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Kosovo Crisis" (In Turkish: "Kosova Krizinde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası")⁷⁴, the PhD thesis of Cem Ogulturk "Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War in the Context of the Independence Process of Kosovo";⁷⁵ the PhD thesis of Eylem Altunya "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey (1991-2001)"⁷⁶; Hajro Limaj book *Between Ankara and Tirana: 1990-2000, From the Diary of a Military Attaché* (In Albanian: Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës: 1990-2000, Nga Ditari i Një Atasheu Ushtarak)⁷⁷, Gencer Özcan and Kemali Saybaşı edited book *New Balkans, Old Problems* (In Turkish: Yeni Balkanlar, Eski Sorunlar)⁷⁸, the PhD thesis of Jahja Muhasilović "Turkey's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak (2002–2017)"⁷⁹ as well as the research paper "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans",⁸⁰ and so on.

From the literature review especially the extensive academic works such as books and PhD thesis that have to do with the topic we are dealing with, in general it is noticed that there is a gap of use of local sources from the Balkan region. This may also be a result of perhaps not mastering the languages of this region. Therefore, this PhD thesis will aim

⁷¹ Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun, "Ankara ve Berlin'in Bosna Savaşı'na Yönelik Politikaları: Karşılaştırmalı Bir İnceleme", **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, Vol. 4, No. 13 (Spring 2007): 57-88.

⁷² Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War (1992-1995): A Constructivist Analysis", **Karadeniz Araştırmaları**, No. 28 (Winter 2011): 1-18.

⁷³ Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun, "Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası (1990-2008)", **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, Vol. 7, No. 27 (2010): 51-86.

⁷⁴ Fuat Aksu, "Kosova Krizinde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası", **YDÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi**, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2010): 51-89.

⁷⁵ Cem Ogulturk, "Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War in the Context of the Independence Process of Kosovo" (PhD thesis, Yeditepe University Graduate Institute of Social Science, 2012).

⁷⁶ Eylem Altunya, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey (1991-2001)" (PhD thesis, Bilkent University Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, September 2003).

⁷⁷ Hajro Limaj, **Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës: 1990-2000: Nga Ditari i Një Atasheu Ushtarak** (Tiranë: Emal, 2012).

⁷⁸ Gencer Özcan ve Kemali Saybaşı (ed.), **Yeni Balkanlar, Eski Sorunlar** (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1997).

⁷⁹ Jahja Muhasilović, "Turkey's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak (2002–2017)", (PhD Dissertation, Boğaziçi University Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, 2020).

⁸⁰ Jahja Muhasilovic, "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans", **Rising Powers Quarterly**, Vol. 3, Issue 3 (2018): 63-85.

to fill this gap, by consulting local sources especially the primary sources where through conducting interviews and providing information from the media will aim to supplement the existing literature. Also in terms of time frame connotation, the PhD thesis analyzes Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans until 2021, which means that it deals with the latest developments within the topic being analyzed.

1.7. . Study Limits

The scientific elaboration of a broad topic within a time frame of around thirty years undoubtedly has its limitations. It is worth noting that the study was conducted on a macro perspective, which means that the analysis of foreign policy in the context of developments in the Western Balkans region has a horizontal extension. Given the time frame included in the study and the numerous developments that occurred during this period, it presents a difficulty for the realization of a micro-level analysis with vertical deepening. The latter is seen to be commonly used in the analysis of bilateral relations between two states, or a state's approach to a particular development within a given region. Studies of this nature, for example, have been encountered during the elaboration of Turkey's foreign policy in the Bosnian war or in the Kosovo war or the analysis of the JDP foreign policy in the Western Balkans within a certain period of time. This form of study provides a more detailed picture of the particular case which is studied.

It is also worth noting that macro analyzes generally tend to become simplistic and to some extent schematic, as they minimize the sub-variables of micro analyzes that may have a substantive impact on the phenomenon being analyzed. However, on the other hand we cannot leave without underlining the fact that this PhD thesis is among the few studies that offers a modest contribution towards the elaboration of reflexes and the impact of Turkish foreign policy on the most important developments in the Western Balkans region after Cold War period, as well as has created space for future studies to make micro analysis of Turkey's foreign policy on some developments in the region which have not been elaborated so far.

Also regarding subtopics which are elaborated for the first time exclusively in this PhD thesis, it should be noted that in principle there was not enough scientific literature. The

author is mainly supplied with information from electronic media and interviews which he has managed to conduct.

1.8. . Structure of the PhD Dissertation

The PhD thesis, in addition to the introduction and conclusion, is composed of three main chapters which include subchapters.

The introductory part presents a guide for the researcher, while to the reader gives an overview of what the PhD thesis is about. More specifically, the introductory part provides a summary of the conceptual and theoretical framework of the doctoral thesis.

The first chapter covers the elaboration of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans region from 1990 until 2002 when the JDP came to power. The first subchapter of chapter one gives a brief historical and geopolitical overview of Turkey and the Balkan region, continues to address the reasons for Turkey's active access to this region, elaborates in a more comprehensive way the approach of Turkey during the dissolution of Yugoslavia with special emphasis on the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The last part of this subchapter deals with the intensification of bilateral relations of Turkey with new sovereign states of former Yugoslavia and Turkey's lobbying for access of the Balkan countries in the Black Sea Economic Organization. While the second subchapter deals with the developments in the Balkans after the Dayton Agreement, more specifically analyzes Turkey's approach during internal anarchy in Albania as a result of pyramid schemes in 1997, continues with the Kosovo conflict during 1998-1999, where in a comprehensive way is analyzed the role of Turkish diplomacy during this conflict, the participation of the Turkish army in the NATO operation during the bombing of Serbia, the status of the Turkish minority in Kosovo after the NATO intervention and the role of the Albanian community in Turkey during the Kosovo conflict. The last part of this subchapter focuses on Turkey's Approach in the Macedonian Internal Conflict of 2001.

The second chapter deals with the Turkey's JDP-led foreign policy between the years 2002-2015. The first subchapter discusses the approach of Turkey's foreign policy under the JDP in the Western Balkans during the first years of government, which is

considered to be until 2009. This period is mainly marked by the intensification of bilateral meetings with the countries of the Western Balkans. Concrete topics during these meetings have been the Euro-Atlantic perspectives, taking into account how Turkey as well as the countries of this region aimed at integration into the European Union and NATO. Additionally, the establishment of diplomatic relations of Turkey with Montenegro, as well as the Turkish diplomatic position on the process of Kosovo's independence are elaborated during this subchapter. The second subchapter discusses the approach of Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans from the arrival of Ahmet Davutoğlu as foreign minister in 2009 until 2016, when he resigned from the post of prime minister. At the beginning of this period, Turkey's ambitions for EU integration fade, the circumstances in the international system begin to change and the JDP leadership feels the moment that Turkey has the opportunity and capacity to develop a more independent and active policy, especially in its neighboring regions. Scholars also referred to this approach as Neo-Ottomanism. In this regard, this subchapter focuses on developments such as the rapprochement of bilateral relations between Serbia and Turkey, the establishment of trilateral mechanism between Turkey-Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo and the rise of dilemmas for the Neo Ottoman approach of Turkey, the government-related organizations as a foreign policy tool of Turkey in Western Balkans, Turkey's request for change of history text books in Kosovo as well as the debates over Turkey's involvement in the establishment of the political subject "Besa Movement" in Macedonia.

The third chapter focuses on the period after the departure of Ahmet Davutoğlu from the post of Prime Minister in 2016 and the assumption of foreign policy by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This chapter deals with the new phase of Turkey's foreign policy, which scholars describe as the personification of foreign policy; given that decision-making exclusively is concentrated in the hands of the president. The development of foreign policy in the framework of personal relations between the Turkish president and the leaders of the Western Balkan states also is elaborated. And the last part of this chapter in a comprehensive way focuses on the struggle with the FETÖ network in the Western Balkans as a top priority of Turkey's foreign policy under

Erdoğan. The conclusion part of the PhD includes a general recapitulation of the chapters in order to answer the main questions and to defend the hypotheses.



2. DEVELOPMENT OF TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES AFTER THE END OF COLD WAR (1990-2002)

2.1. Change in the International System and the Restructuration of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans (1990 - 1995)

The end of the Cold War and the end of the bipolar confrontation between East and West changed the concept of the international system in global context. The early 1990's marked the period of transition from the bipolar system to a unipolar system with a sole superpower, that of the USA. The states that were part of the "Cold War" had to reformulate their foreign policies in order to protect their national interests. Turkey was an relevant state in the Cold War era due to her geopolitical position, and as a result of this new system, the need to restructure its foreign policy emerged. Being in the unique position as both the successor of the Ottoman Empire and the bridge between various regions, the Turkish government used the advantage of geography and history to advance its position on the world stage.

The end of the Cold War enabled the establishment of many independent countries from the Eastern bloc that made the transition from the communist system characterized by a single party and planned economy, to the pluralist system with a market economy. More concretely, this was the case for the vast majority of former Soviet Union countries and those in the Balkan region. This situation gave Turkey open space and advantage for turning it into a regional power in the future, especially in the Balkans. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, as a result of the nationalist policies of Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević, prevented the soft transition and peace separation of new states from the Yugoslav federation. The Balkan region during the period of 1990's was characterized by various types of repression, massive displacement, civil war and genocide. This turbulent transition, experienced in the Balkans, was followed closely by Turkey and impacted her foreign policy. During this period, Turkey was considered as a

relevant factor both from parties involved in the conflicts as well as from the international community. In fact, the 1990's was considered to be the beginning of Turkey's active approach in the Balkan region. Turkey's direct involvement through diplomatic and military tools in ending of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the recognition of newly-formed states from the ruins of Yugoslavia, as well as participation in all multinational peacekeeping forces after the conflicts in BiH, Kosovo and Macedonia and after the internal anarchy in Albania, are evidence of her active presence in the Balkans. By transitioning to multidimensional diplomacy in the 1990s, Turkey gained recognition and respect in the international arena. It should be noted that Turkey's approach was in the same line with the western international community, particularly with the USA regarding the Balkan region. This means that Turkey supported the policies of these countries regarding the Balkan region. In all the crises that occurred in the Balkans they acted together to find a solution. Turkey within the western international community was ready to contribute to diplomatic negotiations, military operations, peacekeeping missions, but above all through humanitarian diplomacy, where in almost all the Balkan crises of the 1990s Turkey was a shelter for refugees.

The purpose of this first subchapter is to give a brief description of Turkey's historical and geopolitical ties with the Balkan region, continuing with her active approach during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian war, as well as examining Turkey's initiative to establish the Black Sea Economic Organization.

2.1.1. Turkey and Balkans - Short Historical and Geostrategic Overview

Firstly the Ottoman Empire, then Turkey as its successor have a history of relations for more than five centuries with the Balkan region. Their intertwined history has been a determinant factor in the religious, ethnic, economic and cultural structure of the region. Viewed through the prism of the Ottoman Empire, in the one hand the Balkans represented the peak of territorial expansion in Europe, while on the other hand this region was the catalyst from which the empire began to shrink and dissolve into what later would become the Republic of Turkey.

Long historical ties between Turkey and the Balkan region have influenced inter human relations. Turkey has paid close attention to the Balkans, due to Turkish minorities living within the Balkan region itself, and those in Turkey with Balkan ties. For Turkey the preservation of peace and stability in the Balkans has been always of vital importance importance.⁸¹

Since the early years of Turkey as a republic, her leadership has paid attention to the bilateral relations with other states, especially with those whose territories were under Ottoman rule. Turkish leadership was focused on overcoming the stereotype held by other states; that of being perceived to follow the policies of the former imperial state. The modern Turkey became a loyal defender of the concept of formal and legal equality with other Balkan states.⁸²

With the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey aimed to create and maintain peaceful relations with its neighbors, aiming to consolidate her new frontiers. Within her new foreign policy, Turkey followed two basic principles; the "status quo" principle and the principle of "neutrality". Despite being heir of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has never had territorial pretensions to the lands which before were under Ottoman administration, nor has it used Turkish and Muslim citizens outside its borders to achieve its foreign policy objectives. The motto "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad" has been the cornerstone of Turkish foreign policy. This philosophy refers to non-involvement in domestic affairs of other countries and not taking part in military alliances that could potentially involve the country in a new war.⁸³ Turkey also applied this approach to her interactions with the Balkan countries. In this regard, Turkey has signed treaties of friendship and cooperation with Albania (1923), Bulgaria and Yugoslavia (1925) in order to ensure peace, prosperity and economic development between this countries.⁸⁴

⁸¹ "Balkan Ülkeleri İle İlişkiler", **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/balkanlar_ile-iliskiler.tr.mfa, [04.01.2018].

⁸² Dilek Barlas, "Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, Opportunities and Limits for Middle-Power Activism in the 1930's", **Journal of Contemporary History**, Vol. 40, No .3 (2005): 444.

⁸³ Birgül Demirtaş, "Türkiye ve Balkanlar", **Balkanlar'da Siyaset**, ed. Birgül Demirtaş, Şaban Çalış (Eskişehir:Anadolu Üniversitesi, 2012): 264.

⁸⁴ **Ibid**, 264.

During the period between the two world wars, Turkey's foreign policy towards the Balkans was characterized by active diplomacy, with which the main objective was to preserve her security and the existence of the country. For this reason, the whole diplomatic trajectory was developed in this direction. Turkey signed bilateral agreements with the Balkan states in which the focus was on economic cooperation and security. To go further, Turkey is also considered to be the ideator of the Balkan Pact in 1934.

In this context, in 1926, the Turkish ambassador to Romania, Ragip Baydur, proposed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Ion G. Duca, the establishment of a Balkan Pact consisting of six states. The subsequent year, Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras, following the preliminary idea, supported the concept of establishing a pact with the motto "The Balkans belong to the Balkan peoples". At the World Peace Congress, held in Athens in 1929, Greece proposed the establishment of a Balkan Union. In the Congress was decided to be organized an informal conference among the Balkan states.⁸⁵

So the first Balkan Conference was held in Athens, Greece, from the sixth to the tenth October, 1930. The second conference was organized a year later in Istanbul, Turkey, from the twentieth to the twenty-sixth of October, 1931. The third conference was held in Bucharest, Romania, from the twenty-third through the twenty-sixth of October, 1932. Lastly, the fourth and final conference was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, from the fifth to the eleventh of November, 1933. Finally, in Athens on February 9, 1934, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania signed the Balkan Pact. The main objective of the pact was the willingness of the Balkan states to protect themselves from revisionist and propaganda initiatives. It is worth noting that the Pact has achieved the goal to keep the status quo and from the Turkish perspective, the country has strengthened her prestige in the international arena.⁸⁶

In Turkey's context, The Balkan Pact was the first multilateral agreement on a field of defense. It should be emphasized that this pact established the first regional alliance

⁸⁵ Barış Ertem, "Atatürk'ün Balkan Politikası ve Atatürk dönemi'nde Türkiye Balkan Devletleri İlişkileri", **Akademik Bakış Dergisi**, No. 21 (2010): 15.

⁸⁶ **Ibid**, 21.

without support or indoctrination from great powers. Even though this pact was established in a period of crisis, it was the longest-running and most comprehensive cooperation in the Balkan region.⁸⁷

The 1934 Balkan Pact has been one of the key events that marked the relationship between Turkey and the Balkans until the end of World War II. Nearly all Balkan peninsula states were involved in the Second World War, while Turkey with a very cautious diplomacy, managed to keep the country out of this war, despite the pressures from the great powers to be involved in this war.

The end of the Second World War generated the beginning of the Cold War, perhaps one of the longest in global perspective. In fact, the Cold War marked the creation of a bipolar system in international relations. The world was splitted into two poles, the East and West, and each state was positioned according to its national interests, then according to ideological, geopolitical, economic and other reasons. Having her geographical position and the implications of post-World War II, Turkey decided to line up with the West, integrating into the North Atlantic Alliance. Later, Turkey's objective was to be part of the European Economic Community, also known as the EU today. The Balkan countries, on the other hand, were separated into three blocks; namely Romania, Albania and Bulgaria in the Eastern block led by the USSR, Greece with the Western block, while Yugoslavia focused on maintaining its neutral status.

Taking into consideration the potential threat coming from the USSR, Balkan countries like Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey saw the need for rapprochement and eventually the creation of a similar alliance as in 1934. Perhaps in the most critical situation was Yugoslavia, considering the deteriorating relationship between Yugoslavia and USSR, mainly due to Josip Broz Tito's split with Joseph Stalin in 1948. With the support of Western Allies, Turkey and Greece set out to talk with Yugoslavian leadership about the creation of an alliance, which later resulted in the Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation treaty signed on February 28, 1953 in Ankara.⁸⁸ The Balkan alignment

⁸⁷ Gencer Özcan, "Türk Dış Politikasında Süreklilik ve Değişim: Balkanlar Örneği", **Yeni Balkanlar, Eski Sorunlar**, ed. Gencer Özcan, Kemali Saybaşı (Istanbul : Bağlam Yayınları, 1997): 213.

⁸⁸ Hale, **Turkish Foreign Policy**, 90.

became an alliance on the 9 of August, 1954 in Bled, Yugoslavia.⁸⁹ The Pact will be known as the "Pact of Alliance, Political Co-operation and Mutual Assistance". This refers that the allies in the future should find themselves under an obligation to honour the contractual pledge of assistance in case of attack on one of the members of alliance by the third powers.⁹⁰

This pact became a dead letter as a result of the new developments. First, there was a new approach of Soviet foreign policy after the death of USSR leader Joseph Stalin in 1953. The new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev began to pay particular attention to Yugoslavia in the attempt to create a more positive climate between the two states. Meanwhile, Cyprus problem created new tension between Turkey and Greece that led to the deterioration of the Balkan Pact. This caused Turkish-Greek relations to be shaken which ultimately prevented cooperation with the Balkans.⁹¹

Another initiative of cooperation between the Balkan countries in which Turkey was included was the Stoica Plan. The idea came from Romanian Prime Minister, Chivu Stoica in 1957. Stoica's plan involved six Balkan countries; Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. The objective of the plan was to resolve disagreements between the included countries, and to find models for cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields.⁹² Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia accepted the plan but Greece and Turkey rejected due to political, ideological and military divisions derived from the Cold War. The Stoica Plan failed due to the reasons mentioned above. In the case of Turkey, the policies of the ruling Democratic Party were in accordance with the USA, and this attempt was seen as maneuver from the Soviet Union whose objective was to split the relations between USA and Turkey and also break the ties with NATO.⁹³

Another initiative in the context of Turkey's cooperation in Balkans in the period of Cold War was not marked. It is worth highlighting Albania's signal for cooperation, giving a

⁸⁹ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 53.

⁹⁰ For more see: https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/3/7/37325/RDC_54_396_BIL.pdf, [16.01.2018]

⁹¹ Salih Işık, "Balkan Antantı, Balkan Paktı ve Türkiye" (Master thesis, Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2011), 130-133.

⁹² Demirtaş, "Türkiye ve Balkanlar", 242.

⁹³ İlhan Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", **Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt-2: 1980-2001)**, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010): 173.

favorable vote to Turkey, on Turkey's dispute with Greece over Cyprus at the United Nations in 1965. The total isolation from her neighbors, her problem with Greece over the Epirus, including the issue of Albanian minority, motivated Albania to vote in favor of Turkey. Additionally, creating and maintaining friendly relations with Turkey during this time was advantageous for Albania. Meanwhile, in the mid-1970s, under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit, Turkey carried out its first visit to Romania by her foreign minister Turan Güneş. Ecevit's proactive approach was also marked by the signing of joint declaration with Romania and declaration for good neighborhood with Bulgaria in 1975. Whereas, one year later, the leader of Yugoslavia, Tito, paid a visit Ankara. Meanwhile, in 1978 in his second term as prime minister, Ecevit realized his first visit in Yugoslavia followed by another visit in Romania.⁹⁴

In the 1980s, Turkey's relations with the Balkans did not mark any specific events except an serious conflict with Bulgaria due to efforts at the assimilation of the Turkish minority. It is worth mentioning the conference initiated by Yugoslavia at the level of foreign ministers of six states (Yugoslavia, Albania, Turkey, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria), in which Turkish foreign minister Mesut Yilmaz was also present. This event took place during the period when tectonic changes were happening in the context of the international system. The conference was organized in Belgrade at 24th of February 1988. There were no preconditions for taking part in the conference, and there was not a fixed agenda in which the participants would focus. The primary purpose of the conference was based on free exchange of views in the common interests of all states, and the creation of a positive climate for cooperation in various fields.⁹⁵ The participants of the conference shared the same opinion for the necessity of the multilateral cooperation in various fields such as trade, transport, tourism, energy, science, telecommunications, living environments, health, sports, etc.⁹⁶ The conference held in Belgrade marked an important step forward, in three segments: First, realizing a conference in the political situation of that time it was something that deserved every

⁹⁴ **Ibid**, 173-174.

⁹⁵ Ranko Petković, "Novi Prioriteti u Spoljnoj Politici Jugoslavije", **Politički Misao**, Vol. 27, No.1 (1990): 112.

⁹⁶ Duško Lopandić, Jasminka Kronja, **Regionalne Inicijative i Multilateralna Saradnja na Balkanu** (Beograd: Evropski Pokret u Srbiji, 2010), 52.

respect; Second, it was proposed that the conference be realized every two years, in which the host would be one of the member countries; and lastly, the member countries consensual acceptance of a broad program for cooperation.⁹⁷

In the conference, Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Petar Mladenov, and Turkish Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz agreed to set up committees to work on issues of mutual interest, particularly regarding the questions of human rights. This enabled Turkey to vocalize, in an official capacity, strong complaints against Bulgaria's treatment of its minority, who were forced to accept Bulgarianized names during the Todor Zhivkov regime of 1984-1985. Yılmaz also used the opportunity to meet his Greek counterpart, Karolos Papoulias, in which both reached an agreement to organize a "political committee" to discuss Greek-Turkish issues.⁹⁸

The second conference, at the level of foreign ministers, was held in Tirana, Albania from the 24th-25th of October, 1990. Milestone conclusions were achieved in the conference, mainly in regards to furthering cooperation, amongst member states, on the regional level. It was proposed that along with regular meetings between the foreign ministers, meetings of the ministers of economy and senior officials of the foreign affairs ministries should occur at least twice a year. There was also talk of organizing meetings between the heads of state, to intensify the regional cooperation. Member states also proposed to set up an Institute for Economic Analysis in the Balkans and a conference on security cooperation and other forms of multilateral institutional cooperation.⁹⁹ During the period between 1988 and 1990, over twenty meetings at the governmental level, and over ten non-governmental meetings were held, among them the meeting of foreign ministers in Sofia in 1988, the meeting of ministers for transport in Belgrade in 1988, the meeting of ministers of economy in 1989, the meeting of ministers in the fields of industry and technology in Bucharest in 1989, the meeting of national committees for UNESCO in Ankara in 1989, the meeting of experts for the

⁹⁷ Petković, "Novi Prioriteti u Spoljnoj Politici", 112.

⁹⁸ David Binder, "Rivalry Aside, 6 Balkan Lands Meet and Agree", **New York Times**, 03.06.1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/03/06/world/rivalry-aside-6-balkan-lands-meet-and-agree.html>, [17.01.2018].

⁹⁹ Lopandič, Kronja, **Regionalne Inicijative i Multilateralna Saradnja**, 53.

establishment of the Convention for Ecological Protection in Antalya in 1989, and Red Cross and Red Crescent meeting in Istanbul in 1989.¹⁰⁰

This initiative for cooperation between Balkan countries eventually failed due to the internal crisis in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was faced with civil wars, which automatically led to the country's isolation from the international community.¹⁰¹

In general, these are some of the events, more exactly, the bilateral and the multilateral relations of Turkey with the Balkan countries in the historic context from her establishment as a republic until the end of the Cold War. We will have space to elaborate on Turkey's post-Cold War foreign policy and its new approach to the region, through the following part of the dissertation.

- **Geostrategic perspective**

In terms of geography, Turkey is also a Balkan state, with about 5% of its territory, consisting of the Thracian region, which extends into the Balkans peninsula. Despite the fact that its territory within the Balkans is small, Turkey has usually preferred to be identified with this region, which is also the starting point for the Western hemisphere rather than Middle East region. For this reason, the Balkans, its geography and other determinants such as culture, kinship, and economic aspects, have always appeared among the focal points of Turkey's foreign policy.¹⁰²

For Turkey, the Balkans in terms of geography, is important for several reasons:

- Apart from the economic, political, cultural, kinship and educational relations of Turkey with the Balkans, the region has always been the safest and most practical way for Turkey to export its goods to Europe. Possible instability and a crisis in the Balkan states would automatically interrupt the export routes of Turkish goods. The most recent cases of interruption, were the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as the internal crisis in Macedonia in 2001. Apart from the

¹⁰⁰ Petković, "Novi Prioriteti u Spoljnoj Politici", 113.

¹⁰¹ Lopandić, Kronja, **Regionalne Inicijative i Multilateralna Saradnja**, 53.

¹⁰² Ahmet Yıldız, "Türkiye'nin Balkanlarda etkin bir Politika İzlemesinin Avrupa Birliği ile olan İlişkilere Etkileri" (Master thesis, Trakya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2006), 16.

economic slump that may occur, Balkan destabilization also means the risk of this land route becoming unusable by Turkish citizens who live in Europe and want to come back to Turkey for holidays. In such a situation, these people will have to look for other alternatives.¹⁰³

- Another point in the geostrategic context that connects Turkey and Balkans, is the energy. In recent years, energy has been made the main determinant of relations between states. Not only energy producing countries, but also the transit countries gained a key role in geostrategic positions. In this context, during the first decade of XXI century, Turkey is considered to be an inevitable geostrategic factor in all energy planning. In other words, while in ancient times all roads lead to Rome, in the first decade of the XXI century it is possible to say that all energy roads lead to Bosphorus.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, geopolitics once again link Turkey with the Balkans.
- Any possible formation of classical alliances between Bulgaria and Greece against Turkey may cause consequences. This means that this hypothetical alliance can blockade European trade routes of Turkey. For this reason, it is in Turkey's best interest to have good relation with Bulgaria and Greece and to not create tension that would result in aligning these countries against Turkey.¹⁰⁵
- And lastly as İlhan Uzgel says that:

“Turkish Straits are separating the Balkans and the Anatolian peninsula, but also connects the two peninsulas. The Thrace region, the only land part of Turkey in the Balkans, has great importance for the defense of Istanbul and the Straits.”¹⁰⁶

2.1.2. Reasons for Turkey's Increasing Involvement in the Balkans

Since its inception, the Republic of Turkey has based its foreign policy on two principles: neutrality and the maintenance of the status quo. But after the changes in international politics at the end of Cold War, Turkey began to evaluate these principles. The Post-Cold War political climate allowed Turkey to make changes to these fundamental principles, aiming to adapt to the changes that took place during this period. Following the new implications in the nearby regions of Turkey, such as the Caucasus,

¹⁰³ Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, 170-171.

¹⁰⁴ Blerim Reka, **Gjeopolitika dhe Teknika e Zgjerimit të UE-së**, (Bruksel: Aspect, 2010), 95.

¹⁰⁵ Ogulturk, “Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War”, 79.

¹⁰⁶ Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, 170-171.

the Middle East and the Balkans, the attitude was that it is time to take advantage of geography and history.¹⁰⁷ Based on historical and geographical factors, Turkey's ambition of being viewed as an important actor and factor on the Balkan Peninsula is reasonable. Sharing 500 years of common history between them, it can be said that there is a strong connection between the people of Turkey and those of the Balkans, which is not easily broken. When any crisis occurs in the Balkan states, the eyes of the international community were directed towards Turkey. In symbolic terms, a considerable number of the Balkan states refer to Turkey as a "big brother", because Turkey has not failed to come to their aid when they were faced with difficulties. Turkey's role as a big brother to the Balkans can be seen, especially, from the 1990s to the present day. The latest evidence of this role was the letter from the President of Macedonia to USA, NATO, EU and Turkey informing for the internal crisis which the country was faced with, and sought for help to pass this situation.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the geo-political factor in the post-Cold War constellations has obliged Turkey to be active in the Balkans. As noted earlier, the Balkans represent a transitional route connecting Europe with Asia. As a region also represent an important security pillar, which means that any possible unrest in the Balkans has consequences in all surrounding countries, especially Turkey.

Apart from these reasons, Turkey must also consider the human factor. Around one million people with Turkish ethnical background live in the Balkan region. Besides the Turkish minorities, ethnic groups belonging to Islam are also important for Turkey. From the Ottoman period until now, as a result of migrations, a strong relationship has developed between Turkey and the Muslim communities of the Balkans. Good part of people that moved from Balkans toward Turkey today are in the good positions within Turkish society and normally they are a reference for cultivating relations between

¹⁰⁷ Elona Selmanaj, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Balkan Sorununda Başat Aktörlerin Politikaları: AB, ABD, Türkiye ve Rusya" (Master thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Eylül 2014), 93.

¹⁰⁸ For more see: "Pismo za SAD, EU i NATO: Ivanov Pod Hitno Traži da se Odbaci Tiranska Platforma!", **Srbija Danas**, 07.03.2017, <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/region/pismo-za-sad-eu-i-nato-ivanov-pod-hitno-trazi-da-se-odbaci-tiranska-platforma-2017-03-07>, [20.01.2018].

Turkey and the Balkan region.¹⁰⁹ These people take active part in associations, foundations, media, academia, politics, and military etc. Having this in mind, Turkish leadership finds it difficult to stay indifferent to the developments and circumstances in this area.¹¹⁰

Turkey's ambition of being a regional power is the driving force behind her active role in the Balkans. Taking into consideration indicators such as military power, population size, economic strength (16th world economy, G-20 member organization) and its diplomatic weight in international organizations, Turkey is considered to be a medium-sized power in the international system.¹¹¹ Having these factors in mind, Turkey aims to have the dominating influence in the Balkans, mainly through the economy, providing military support for the Balkan states, and in cases where there are crisis between Balkan countries to play the role of mediator as a third party. This approach is especially noticeable during the last decade. In the implementation of her policies, Turkey is cautious in not creating negative stereotypes, because she is also the heir of the Ottoman Empire, and certainly some of the Balkan people still negatively perceive the Ottoman Empire as the occupier of their territories. In this context, Turkey strives to impose herself as a regional power, while using the instruments of soft power and public

¹⁰⁹ Emir Musli, "Bosanci u Srcu Turske", **Deutsche Welle**, 19.05.2012, <https://www.dw.com/bs/bosanci-u-srcu-turske/a-15962612>; "Bošnjaci u Turskoj Uspjeli su uz Veliki Rad i Međusobnu Solidarnost", **Moj BiH**, 12.11.2019, <https://mojabih.oslobodjenje.ba/mb/b-v-logovi/bosnjaci-u-turskoj-uspjeli-su-uz-veliki-rad-i-medusobnu-solidarnost-1662>; Hüsrev Tabak, "Shqiptarët në Turqi po Zgjohehen", **Ekonomia - Ks**, 17.05.2021, <http://ekonomia-ks.com/sq/opinion/shqiptaret-ne-turqi-po-zgjohehen>; "Kryekëshilltari i Presidentit të Turqisë: Jo vetëm Erdogani, por të Gjithë Turqit Kanë Simpati për Shqiptarët", **Lajm Press**, 10.11.2020, <https://lajmpress.org/kryekeshilltari-i-presidentit-te-turqise-jo-vetem-erdogani-por-te-gjithe-turqit-kane-simpaty-per-shqiptaret/>; "Претседателот на Турскиот Парламент Горд на Своите Корени од Гевгелија", **MMS**, <https://mms.mk/189917/претседателот-на-турскиот-парламент/>, [14.05.2021]; Qamil Bytyçi, **Shqiptarët e Harruar në Turqi / Türkiye'de Unutulmuş Arnavutlar** (Istanbul:Kalkedon Yay, 2021), 129-132.

¹¹⁰ Erhan Türbedar, "Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles", **Insight Turkey** Vol. 13, No. 3 (2011): 141; Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, "Turkey in the New Security Environment in the Balkan and Black Sea Region", **Turkey Between East and West: New Challenges for a Rising Regional Power**, ed. Vojtech Mastny, R. Craig Nation (New York: Routledge, 1996): 74.

¹¹¹ Meltem Müftüler, Müberra Yüksel, "Turkey: A Middle Power in the New Order", **Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War**, ed. Andrew F. Cooper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997): 188-189; Buğra Süsler, "Turkey: An Emerging Middle Power in a Changing World?", **LSE IDEAS Special Report** (May 2019): 7-9.

diplomacy in an attempt to minimize the stereotypes of the past. But again, in certain academic circles, the current activism of Turkey is perceived as Neo-Ottomanism.¹¹²

The last reason for Turkey's increasing participation in the Balkan region, would be to accumulate allies in support of her integration into the European Union. Joining the EU is one of Turkey's key objectives, but due to the exercise of veto for negotiating chapters by EU member states such as Cyprus or France, has caused further negotiations to stalemate. In the other hand, the Western Balkan countries have the same objectives for EU integration. In this context, the exchange of experiences between Turkey and Western Balkans towards integration is more than welcome, while the support and lobbying from the Balkan countries for eventual integration of Turkey in the EU will have a special significance for Turkey.¹¹³ Ultimately, Turkey's active approach to the Balkans will be justified when these allies lobby for her possible integration into the European Union.

2.1.3. Dissolution of Yugoslavia and Turkish Foreign Policy Approach

The beginning of the 1990s brought radical changes in the political context both globally and regionally. The duality of the international system by the two superpowers; the USSR and the USA, between two hemispheres; that of the East and the West, and two ideologies; communism and liberal democracy, came to the end. This duality was slowly coming to an end, as one superpower ultimately immersed.

The concept of liberal democracy proved to be more successful and more effective, leaving the Eastern Bloc scrambling to transition from one concept to another, which is easier said than done. The domino effect of the collapse of the Communist System and the transition to liberal democracy followed from one state to another. Some countries transitioned quickly and with no serious consequences, while in others, the consequences of the transition are still today.

¹¹² Ajhan Shimshek, Boris Georgievski, "Турција на Балканот - Митови и Илузии", **Deutsche Welle**, 17.05.2012, <https://www.dw.com/mk/турција-на-балканот-митови-и-илузии/a-15954012>, [14.05.2021].

¹¹³ Žarko Petrovič, Dušan Reljič, "Turkish Interests and Involvement in the Western Balkans: A Score-Card", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2011): 163.

The domino effect, mentioned previously, affected the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, which was faced with its dissolution on June of 1991. It should be noted that the culmination of the crisis in the federation was in the early stage of 1990s. There were several problems, erupting simultaneously, in the political, economic, social and ethnic context, which at the end turned into a snowball effect. The protagonists of the communist regime in Yugoslavia turned a blind eye to the rising issues, choosing to act too late and ultimately leading to the failure of the state.¹¹⁴ Certain groups within the federation, unsatisfied with the system, started to rebel by showing the defects that was dominating the state. These groups' directed their criticism towards the federal system, which according to them was "ill", as well as the concept of planned economy showed to be ineffective. Additionally, the emergence of nationalism proved troublesome. Constituent groups started backing various nationalist solutions to the current problems, while also blaming other ethnic groups in the federation for the situation in which the country found itself. Serbia was at the forefront of championing national issues. Serbian President Slobodan Milošević is considered to be the protagonist of the rise of nationalism in Serbia. Milošević strategically used nationalism to gain popularity and support, ultimately achieving his goal of being elected president. Milošević continued with this nationalist rhetoric maintaining popularity and approval ratings throughout his presidency. The spirit of nationalism in Serbia approved the extremist policies of Milošević, whose presidency proved authoritarian over time.¹¹⁵

Milošević knew how to stir up nationalistic feelings among the Serbs and used this to his advantage. During his speech on the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo (1389), he stressed that the territory of Kosovo has symbolic significance for Serbs because this place belonged to the ancestors of Serbia and therefore have to be returned to the Serbs. Kosovo was the main target of Milošević's policies, that he used to create tensions between Serbs and Albanians, in order to legitimize his own status in Serbia.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, as a solution for the Yugoslavian crisis, Milošević proposed strong federalism as before the constitution of 1974, because the current constitution weakened

¹¹⁴ Altunya, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey", 52.

¹¹⁵ Altunya, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey", 53.

¹¹⁶ **Ibid**, 54.

the central administration of Yugoslavia, strengthened the republics and gave broader autonomy to the provinces like Kosovo and Vojvodina.¹¹⁷

Contrary to Milošević and Serbia, countries like Croatia and Slovenia, were in favor of political system that would be weaker federal system or maybe confederation in which constituent republics will act in common just in the part of the foreign policy. At the end of the Cold War, swift changes were happening in the Eastern part, in which several countries were embracing the liberal democracy system. While in Yugoslavia, the debate on "recentralization" versus "decentralization", split the Yugoslavian society.¹¹⁸ In this context, the eruption of the problems in the Federation came with the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). The LCY came to an end after the break up of the 14th Extraordinary Congress held in January of 1990.¹¹⁹ The last congress of the Yugoslav Federation between the Serbian representatives and those of Slovenia and Croatia, was characterized by an atmosphere of great tension. The Slovenian delegation was the first to abandon the congressional proceedings, followed by the other delegations, thus, Congress broke without finishing all the agenda items, and with that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia came to an end. This period marked the beginning of a new pluralistic system that was legalized, numerous political parties were established and multiparty elections were held in all federal units of socialist Yugoslavia.¹²⁰

While changes occurred in the framework of the international system, Turkey as a relevant player, also needed to adapt her foreign policy to the new circumstances of the early 1990s. This meant that the risk from the USSR was neutralized as a result of the end of the Cold War. Understanding this opportunity and the need to solidify her place in the international stage, Turkey's focus moved to her neighboring regions; the Middle East, Caucasus and the Balkans. These regions are where Turkey's spheres of influence are strongest because of her geography and shared history. Turkish leadership perceived

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 54-55.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 55.

¹¹⁹ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 66.

¹²⁰ Sherifi, "Zhvillimet Politiko-Diplomatike në Ish-Jugosllavi", 53.

the end of the Cold War as the momentum they needed to imposed themselves as a regional power, with ambitions to be a global contender in the near future.

Taking into consideration that the member states of the Yugoslav federation couldn't manage to settle peacefully, the resulting armed conflict was inevitable. Initially in 1991, armed conflict broke out in Slovenia and soon after in Croatia, where grew into a civil war. Turkish public opinion mainly remained indifferent to the conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia in the early stage of the conflicts in Yugoslavia.¹²¹ It should be emphasized, that despite the deep crisis with which Yugoslavia faced after the end of the Cold War, the relationship between Turkey and Yugoslavia stayed amicable, especially in the economic field. After the eruption of the crisis, Turkish State Minister, Cemil Çicek visited Belgrade to take part in the 8th meeting of the Turkish-Yugoslav Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation. After this visit, Yalım Erez, the former President of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Stock Exchange, highlighted a potential future partnership involving the joint investments of two states, with the goal to sell products to third parties. Meanwhile in October of 1990, the 2nd Turkish-Yugoslavian Business Conference was held, where a memorandum for mutual understanding was signed by Yalım Erez in the behalf of Turkey and Milan Pavič, the former President of Yugoslav Economic Chamber.¹²²

But soon it became evident that the survival of Yugoslavia was impossible and Turkey was concerned how this would affect peace and stability in the Balkans. If the situation were to escalate in this region, the security consequences would directly affect Turkey, especially economically, due to their trade routes that run through the Balkans. To prevent this outcome, Turkey acted proactively by proposing bilateral and regional initiatives in an effort to peacefully resolve the crisis in Yugoslavia. At the beginning of January, 1991, a Turkish delegation led by the ambassador Bilgin Unat, did a tour visiting Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia. Meanwhile on 11th of December 1991, Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, stated that Turkey was ready to help in

¹²¹ Halil Akman , “Yugoslavya’nın Dağılma Sürecinde Türkiye’nin İç Siyasi Durumu ve Dağılmaya Yaklaşımı”, **The Journal of Academic Social Science**, Vol. 3, No. 16 (September 2015): 145.

¹²² Yiğit Anıl Güzelipek, “Turkish Foreign Policy’s Bosnia and Herzegovina Exam (1990-1995)”. **Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi**, Vol. 3, No. 1(Spring 2013): 134-135.

finding a peaceful solution to the problems of Yugoslavia, based to the frameworks set by international organizations, namely according to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a world's most relevant security intergovernmental organization.¹²³

Meanwhile during the crisis situation, it should be noted that both the representatives of the Yugoslav federation and certain leaders of the republics paid a visit in Ankara. Initially, the first visit was made by Borislav Jovič, the president of the Yugoslav federation, in April of 1991 in Ankara, during which Turgut Özal stressed that Turkey supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the federation. After this visit, Macedonian President, Kiro Gligorov visited Ankara from the 9th-11th of July, 1991, while four days later Bosnia and Herzegovina's President Alija Izetbegović visited Turkey. Gligorov and Izetbegović sought for Turkey's support in recognizing the independence of their states.¹²⁴

Turkey initially did not recognize how rapidly the situation in Yugoslavia was deteriorating, and there was no possibility for survival of the federation. The USA and the European community were the first to make the decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia as independent states. Therefore, on February 6, 1992, Turkey officially recognized the independence of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia, and in the August of the same year, established diplomatic relations with these countries.¹²⁵

Yugoslavia's disintegration in 1992 provoked regional concerns and raised alarms at the global level. During the Cold War, as a result of Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia experienced relative prosperity and stability. But post-Cold War saw the return of the concept of "balkanization", which refers to the process of dividing a certain region or state into smaller regions or states that are often either non-cooperative or perhaps enemies with each other.¹²⁶ The conflict initially began in Slovenia and Croatia before

¹²³ Zehra Eroglu, "Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Balkans in the Post-Cold War Era", (Master thesis, Middle East Technical University Graduate School of Social Sciences, April 2005), 18.

¹²⁴ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", 491.

¹²⁵ Demirtaş, "Türkiye ve Balkanlar", 268.

¹²⁶ Kader Özlem, "Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde ABD'nin ve Türkiye'nin Balkanlar Politikaların Bosna Hersek, Kosova ve Makedonya Krizleri Örneğinde İncelenmesi", **Trakya Üniversitesi Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi**, No.1 (2012): 26.

continuing to Bosnia and later spreading to Kosovo. The last two states were faced with fatal consequences.

2.1.4. War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Usually during discussions of the conflicts in Yugoslavia, particularly the conflict in BiH, scholars contribute their genesis to not clearing accounts among the different ethnic groups living in these lands. In more recent years, scholars have pinpointed the political separation manifested in the November 18, 1990 elections as the catalyst of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the elections, it became clear that Bosnian citizens had split overwhelmingly on ethno-national grounds. The three nationalist political parties in the first pluralistic elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were; the Party of Democratic Action, the Serbian Democratic Party, and the Croatian Democratic Union. These parties garnered a combined 79% of the total votes. From the beginning, the leadership of the Serbian and Croatian parties opposed the creation Bosnia and Herzegovina as a unitary state. For them, the unitary state of BiH would be in the context of a short-term period, which would be a step towards secession, followed by unification with the mother states, Croatia and Serbia, respectively. The dissolution of Yugoslavia also led to differences of public opinion in Bosnia. Serbs were in favor of BiH remaining part of the Yugoslav federation, Croats wanted either BiH as an independent state, or eventually sovereignty within a new model of the Yugoslav federation; whereas Muslim Bosnians were for an independent state in a weak federation.¹²⁷

The outcome of the first elections pushed the leadership of the three parties to create a coalition government in which the President of the Presidency a body consisting of seven members would be Muslim, the president of the parliament would be Serbian, and the head of government would be Croat. In terms of ministerial seats, Muslims headed ten ministries, Serbs seven, and Croats five. Almost immediately, cracks appeared in this government. Those elected began to enact policies in the ethnic context, working on cleaning, more clearly, those that don't have the "correct ethnicity". Therefore, the

¹²⁷ Hayden, **From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans**, 50-52.

elections of the 1990s is considered to be the starting point of eliminating ethnic political rivals.¹²⁸

Moreover, the Serbian and Croat leadership were focused on dividing Bosnia's territory. The chances of resisting the Serbo-Croat desire of splitting the republic were minimal, bearing in mind the presence of other factors, such as the population and the potential military artillery they possessed. Hopes of having a stable central authority came to an end when the two presidents of Serbia and Croatia met in March of 1991 in Karađorđevo to discuss the current issues among and the territorial division of BiH between these two states. It should be noted that the details of this meeting, and the eventual agreement between the two presidents, have never been disclosed officially. Judging the actions taken during the war, it can be concluded that the strategic splitting of the territory was the purpose of the meeting.¹²⁹

The tripartite national coalition in BiH collapsed in October of 1991, when Muslim and Croat representatives in parliament approved the decision to separate Bosnia and Herzegovina from Yugoslavia. This decision was not welcomed by Serbian leadership, who chose to leave parliament shortly thereafter. Opposed to this decision, Bosnian Serbs exploited the possibility of organizing a referendum on 9th-10th of November in 1991 in which the majority of Serbs were in favor of BiH remaining in the federation of Yugoslavia. The Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović, after the initiatives of Bosnian Serbs, responded by spreading the message towards the international community, for the recognition of BiH as an independent and sovereign state. The European Community's response to the call of Izetbegović was that they would recognize independent BiH, if the people would confirm this through referendum.¹³⁰

After the stance of the European Community, on the first of March, 1992, a referendum for independence was held, in which 64% of the general population participated, and the rest, mainly the Serbs, boycotted this referendum. The result of the referendum came in

¹²⁸ **Ibid**, 53.

¹²⁹ **Ibid**, 53-54.

¹³⁰ Sherifi, "Zhvillimet Politiko-Diplomatike në Ish-Jugosllavi", 57.

favor of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence, with 99% support. Following this act, the European Union recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state, on 6th while the USA on 7th of April, 1992.¹³¹

The international recognition of BiH gave the Bosnian Serbs the pretext to proclaim their so-called republic "Republika Srpska" identical to that of Serbian Krajina. The annexation of both territories in Croatia and Bosnia, led towards the realization of the Milošević project for a Greater Serbia, which would include all Serbs living in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The Bosnian Croats, who had strong support from the President of Croatia Franjo Tuđman, also proclaimed their state, "Herceg-Bosna". Establishing these "Republics" inside BiH, that later joined to Serbia and Croatia, is considered to be the beginning of the Bosnian war.¹³²

The lack of military artillery of the Bosnian state disabled the neutralization of separatist approaches by Serbs and Croats. Bosnian Muslims also suffered from the fact that the United Nations had imposed arms embargo on Yugoslavia in September of 1991. Even though the Yugoslav federation collapsed, the embargo was not lifted. For the Serbs the decision to keep the embargo in place was a not problem because Serbia was the heir of Yugoslavia and the artillery of the federation was in Belgrade. Additionally, Yugoslav People's Army was under Belgrade's control, giving priority to military battles against other ethnicities, more exactly against Muslim Bosnians and Croats. Meanwhile, Serbia was also in solidarization with their co-nationals in Bosnia by backing them with logistical and military artillery. Even Bosnian Croats had the same support from their homeland Croatia. But compared to the two ethnicities, Muslim Bosnians were in a critical situation Having only 3,500 soldiers, total, available to fight¹³³ in combination with the arms embargo, left Bosnia in very complicated situation. Even in these circumstances, the western international community hesitated to intervene in BiH, qualifying the war as a civil war, which the state should resolve by itself. Meanwhile,

¹³¹ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", 495.

¹³² Ogulturk, "Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War ", 220.

¹³³ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 69.

the peacekeeping forces sent by UN in 1992 did not intervene militarily, for fear of endangering the lives of UN personnel.¹³⁴

The ultra-nationalist approach of Bosnian Serbs against other ethnicities, particularly Muslims, ultimately came with fatal consequences. The policies of ethnic cleansing were implemented in areas controlled by Bosnian Serbs. Regional and global media reported for the systematic murder of Muslims by Serbs, accompanied by raping and torturing women and children. As a result of these policies, thousands of Bosnian Muslims abandoned their homes to save their lives. The Serbian objective to cleanse the territory of other ethnic groups couldn't be stopped even by the international community, more exactly, the UNPROFOR¹³⁵, which behaved indifferently because they feared endangering their staff. In an attempt to shelter Muslim civilians being targeted, the United Nations created safe territories named as "safe heavens" (Sarajevo, Gorazde, Tuzla, Žepa, Bihać and Srebrenica) where Muslims could go to be protected from Serbian aggression.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, this initiative failed spectacularly, and one of the most tragic cases was the Srebrenica genocide.

Taking into consideration the deep crisis with which the country was faced, the international community led by the USA and the European Union, proposed different peace plans¹³⁷ in an attempt to finish the war, but they were unsuccessful. The agony continued until the Croatian army and Bosnian Muslims army unified their forces¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Altunya, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey", 61.

¹³⁵ "The United Nations Protection Force - UNPROFOR, was the first United Nations peacekeeping force initially established in Croatia in 1992 to ensure demilitarization of designated areas. The mandate was later extended in the Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict in order to support the delivery of humanitarian relief, monitor "no fly zones" and "safe areas". "For more see: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unprofor.htm>, [25.01.2018].

¹³⁶ Ogulturk, "Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War", 205-206.

¹³⁷ Between 1992 and 1994, the international community brought together several peace plans to put the end of the war in Bosnia. For more details you can check in Nurşin Ateşoğlu Güney, "Bosna-Hersek Sorunu ve Barış Görüşmeleri Süreci", **Yeni Balkanlar, Eski Sorunlar**, ed. Gencer Özcan, Kemal Saybaşılı (İstanbul:Bağlam Yayınları, 1997).

¹³⁸ While the USA at the time wasn't ready to enter in the war officially, started to prepare other plan which will help to put the end of the conflict. USA gave green light to the USA retired experts in the field of army, to be contracted by the Croatian government to give them suggestions, strategies and tactics which will be useful in the battles against the Serbs. This initiative greatly helped the Croatian army to improve their skills on the ground. In other part, politically, President Tuđman of Croatia showed his political skills following the old saying that my enemy's enemy is my friend and decided to enter in a military alliance with Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs. Also President Izetbegović accepted this idea with positive attitude, clearly conceiving Croatians as less worst than Serbs. So in the summer of 1995,

against the Serbs. The unification of their forces saw the consolidation of military capacities where Croatia destroyed Serbian forces and successfully returned Krajina, re-establishing full authority to Croatia. Meanwhile, despite all the warnings from the international community towards the Serbs to stop the ethnic cleansing, the warnings fell on deaf ears. The casus belli for NATO, acting as representative for international community, came when a mortar fired by Serbs fell on a Markale market in Sarajevo, killing thirty-eight civilians and injuring around eighty-five others. This event precipitated the Operation Deliberate Force, that was initiated by NATO forces on August 28, 1995.¹³⁹ NATO air strikes, against Bosnian Serbs, eventually convinced Milošević to sit at the table of negotiations.¹⁴⁰

Secretary of State of the United States, Richard Hoolbruk, gathered the leadership of the parties that were in conflict, namely the presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, aiming to discuss the details of the peace agreement, in Dayton, Ohio. The main terms of this agreement stated that: 1) BiH is country with its sovereignty and integrity, having temporary "internal borders" between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska; 2) The organization and implementation of general parliamentary elections must be done no later than September 1996 ; 3) Persons accused by the Special War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague, will not be allowed to participate in the elections; 4) An international enforcement body, in this case NATO (IFOR), consisting of 60,000 soldiers, 20,000 being American, would be in country to guarantee free movement around the Bosnian territory; 5) All Bosnian citizens will have the freedom of movement within the territory of Bosnia.¹⁴¹

together, Croats and Bosnians turned their weapons against the Serbian invaders. At the beginning in May, the Croatian and Bosnian army entered the Krajina region and forced Serbs to leave the territory. A lot of Serbians formed infinite refugee columns, escaping with their vehicles to Serbia. When the city of Knin recovered four years after the invasion by the Serbs, Europe became the witness to the greatest forced displacement of the people since the Second World War. John G. Stoessinger, **Përse Kombet Shkojnë në Luftë**, (Tiranë: Instituti i Studimeve Ndërkombëtare, 2007), 145.

¹³⁹ <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/issue3/english/history.html>, [20.02.2018].

¹⁴⁰ Altunya, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey", 62-63.

¹⁴¹ Admir Qose, **Ndërhyrja Parandaluese Ndërkombëtare në Libi – Shmangia e Gjenocidit**, (Skopje: Logos-A, 2015), 256.

The agreement was accepted from all parties and signed on the 14th of December, 1995. Witnesses to this peace agreement were officials from varying countries, including the USA, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the European Union.¹⁴²

2.1.5. Turkey's Activism in the War of Bosnia

During the first conflicts within Yugoslavia more concretely in Slovenia and Croatia, Turkey suggested that the internal affairs be resolved peacefully. But, the escalation of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina alarmed the Turkish leadership to take an active role within the international community in order to prevent conflict and to find an peaceful settlement between the parties.¹⁴³

The further escalation of the conflict in BiH, in addition to the loss of thousands of innocent lives and the complete destruction of the state, a very important preoccupation in Turkey's perspective was the refugee issue. Historically, during any crisis situation in the Balkans, one of the safest shelters for Muslim communities always has been Turkey. The possible arrival of a large wave of Bosnian refugees in Turkey could cause negative effects in the social and economic contexts.¹⁴⁴

It should be noted that there were several reasons for Turkey's active role during the Bosnian conflict. The first can be the kinship aspect that connects Turkey with Bosnia. In Turkey there are a significant number of Turks of Bosnian origin who even today they have family relations with Bosniaks in Bosnia. Turks of Bosnian descent, especially those in important positions within Turkish society, have sensitized public opinion to the suffering of their Bosnian brothers in Bosnia, and "pressured" the Turkish political leadership to take an active approach to resolving the issue.¹⁴⁵ Second, from the perspective of the Turkish government, BiH has special significance in terms of Ottoman heritage on the European continent. According to the Turkish leadership of that time, in case that Ottoman heritage will be destroyed in the Balkan region and especially in Bosnia, there is a big risk of complete marginalization of Turkey from the European

¹⁴² Sttoesinger, **Përse Kombet Shkojnë në Luftë**, 147.

¹⁴³ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", 495.

¹⁴⁴ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Ankara ve Berlin'in Bosna Savaşı'na", 65.

¹⁴⁵ Orkun Elmacigil, "Turkish Foreign Policy During Bosnian Conflict", w.place, w.date, w.page, http://www.academia.edu/20216833/Turkish_Foreign_Policy_During_Bosnian_Conflict, [26.02.2018].

continent. The Ottoman heritage in these countries is evidence of the presence of Turks in the "old continent". For this reason, Turkey's reluctance to be marginalized by Europe sensitized it in defending Bosnia and Bosnian people from the ethnic cleansing from the Milošević regime. When Turkish President Süleyman Demirel paid a visit in BiH in October of 1994, emphasized the obligation of protecting the human rights of Bosnian people, both for cultural as well as humanitarian reasons.¹⁴⁶

Third, the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a good opportunity for Turkey to impose itself as a relevant regional actor. As noted earlier, the Post-Cold War period opened the door for Turkey to expand its presence, especially in nearby regions such as the Caucasus, Black Sea, the Middle East and the Balkans, which were once part of the Ottoman Empire. Official Ankara wanted world powers to know that in the international system, or more specifically, "All states and regions from the Adriatic to China could not take any action for war or peace without the support and consultation of Turkey".¹⁴⁷ With this, Turkey wanted to emphasize her power for influence in world politics and her geostrategic weight.¹⁴⁸

Lastly, had to do with gaining respect as a result of positioning in support of the side that was a victim of this war.

It is worth noting that during the 1990s there was a rivalry between Greece and Turkey over influence in the Balkan region. During the war in Bosnia, Turkey positioned herself in support of Bosnian Muslims as an oppressed people, while Greece supported Milošević's regime. This position of Turkey was appreciated by western international community given the common approach to the resolution of the problem.¹⁴⁹

Additionally, the desire of Turkey for achieving peace in Bosnia as soon as possible was also related to her internal problem with the PKK.¹⁵⁰ Turkey supported the entire

¹⁴⁶ Dilek Barlas, "Turkey and the Balkans: Cooperation in the Interwar and Post Cold War Eras", **Turkish Review of Balkan Studies**, No. 4 (Annual 1998/99): 75.

¹⁴⁷ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Ankara ve Berlin'in Bosna Savaşı'na", 72.

¹⁴⁸ **Ibid.**

¹⁴⁹ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", 501.

¹⁵⁰ The Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK is a Kurdish militant and political organization designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the USA, EU, Japan and Australia. PKK was established in 1984, and since then has been in struggle with Turkish security forces. Her ultimate goal is foundation of an

territorial integrity of BiH, and categorically opposed the idea of Bosnian Serbs in establishing another state. According to official Ankara the idea of creation of a new state within Bosnia, can evoke subsequent conflicts in places like Macedonia, Sandžak or Vojvodina and even can increase the ambitions of PKK of partitioning Turkey.¹⁵¹

Having in mind the reasons of its activism and the role during the three-year conflict in the BiH, Turkey succeeded in imposing itself as a sine qua non actor that would be crucial during the decision-making process within the international community.

2.1.5.1. The Approach of Turkish Diplomacy During the Bosnian War at the International Level

The Bosnian war raised many doubts about the prospects of the Balkan region. There were comments that this war would create a domino effect in other countries such as Kosovo, Macedonia and Sandžak where there is a significant number of the Muslim community. The eventual involvement of these countries in the conflict would automatically affect other countries such as Albania, Greece and Turkey that certainly would not take the role of a spectator. From Turkey's perspective, such a scenario would cause chaos throughout the Balkans. This implied that there was a possibility of a return of history, i.e. the replication of the Balkan Wars that took place in the early twentieth century, but now in a slightly different context.¹⁵² This is another important reason why Turkey aimed to contribute to ending this war as soon as possible through active diplomacy, mainly in international organizations. Ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina will reduce the risk of possible consequences for both Turkey and other countries in the region.

At a time when Serbia increased the intensity of the military aggression in Bosnia, In January 1992, the Foreign Minister of Turkey, Hikmet Çetin, declared that Turkey was available to contribute with military troops within UNPROFOR. During this period the

independent Kurdish state in south-eastern Turkey, Syria and Iraq. For more see: <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/KurdistanWorkersPartyPKK.aspx>; <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/pkk.en.mfa>. [27.02.2018].

¹⁵¹ Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, 499.

¹⁵² Hüseyin Bağcı, “Bosna - Hersek Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Anlaşmazlıklara Giriş”, **Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 15, No. 27 (1992): 260.

European community recognized the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an act that was positively welcomed by Turkey. While on April of 1992, Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel declared that Turkey would put it the Bosnian issue as a priority topic on the agenda of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Two months later, on June 17-18, 1992 in Istanbul was held a meeting of foreign ministers organized of OIC states. Prior to this meeting, a delegation composed of experienced Turkish diplomats in April 1992, paid a six-day official visit to Belgrade, where they met with representatives of the OSCE, the EC, as well as the Serbian and Bosnian leaderships. On the other hand, Turkish President Özal had constant communication with the leaders of countries such as the USA, France, Egypt, etc, discussing the issue of Bosnia¹⁵³

As noted earlier, Turkey raised the Bosnian issue at the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in order to attract the attention of the international community. The reason why Turkey chose OIC to raise the Bosnian problem was because at that time Turkey held the current presidential term of the organization. The presidential term within OIC offered to Turkey the possibility to call an extraordinary meeting of foreign ministers in Istanbul. In this meeting attended 15 foreign ministers and by consensus voted to urge the United Nation to be more concrete in taking measures, including military operation against the Serbs. This meeting was considered as a very important because it forwarded a message to the international community that good part Muslim states were unified in their position over the issue in Bosnia.¹⁵⁴ Apart of this, Turkey sent a letter to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), requesting for financial support in order to help the Bosnian civilians who were facing severe conditions as a result of the war. This request was approved by IDB, and funds were ensured for aid purposes.¹⁵⁵

Along with the aforementioned diplomatic actions taken by Turkey, it also developed an action plan, for BiH, that was presented to the ambassadors of the UN Security Council in August of 1992. In the plan was emphasized that Security Council would give the green light for military operation in case that an peaceful agreement could not be

¹⁵³ Güzelipek, “Turkish Foreign Policy’s Bosnia and Herzegovina Exam”, 136.

¹⁵⁴ Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun, “Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War”, 7.

¹⁵⁵ Şule Kut, “Turkish Diplomatic Initiative for Bosnia-Herzegovina”, **Balkans: A Mirror of the New International Order**, ed. Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Kemali Saybasılı (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1995): 298.

reached. The plan also states that heavy military artillery was to be handed in to UN in period of 2 weeks. The plan was aimed at ending Serbia's military aggression in Bosnia. Otherwise, if the Milošević regime does not accept the terms of this plan, then a UN-backed military operation would be initiated. That is, the action plan did not in any way target Serbia itself, but the main goal was to stop the Serbian aggression. In case of the possible military operation, the plan foresaw that:

“Airport in Banja Luka used by the Serbs would be the first target. The second target would be Serbia's heavy military artillery stationed in the hills. While states that possessed aircraft carriers would send their fleets to the Adriatic sea to assist the operation.”¹⁵⁶

Ultimately, Turkey's plan proposal wasn't accepted by international western community, mainly because they still weren't ready to intervene in the Bosnian conflict, and Turkey herself lacked the capacity to implement the plan alone, and therefore this plan proposal became useless.¹⁵⁷ It should be noted that the action plan adopted by NATO in 1995, which ended the war, had almost the same conditions proposed by Turkey's plan.

In August of 1992, the European Community held the London Conference, in an effort to find a solution to the Bosnian war. The countries who participated consisted of those involved in the war, as well as the EC states. Turkey also received an invitation, even though it was not part of the conflict nor part of the EC. It can be said that this invitation was an indicator about Turkey's growing importance in the region. Turkey's Foreign Minister, Hikmet Çetin, emphasized that at the London Conference, Turkey was the voice of ICO. Additionally, Turkey debriefed the member states of ICO about the final conclusions from the conference in London, thus acting as a connecting point between Islamic world and Europe.¹⁵⁸

As the situation in Bosnia deteriorated, Turkey initiated another initiative called the “Balkan Conference”, which was held in Istanbul on the 25th of November, 1992. In the conference participated countries like Slovenia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Romania and Hungary. The Turkish leadership realized that until this period there was no sign that the conflict would end and that the longer this war lasted, the

¹⁵⁶ Ekinci, “Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era”, 92.

¹⁵⁷ Altunya, “The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey”, 93.

¹⁵⁸ Demirtaş Coşkun, “Ankara ve Berlin’in Bosna Savaşı’na”, 67.

more other countries in the region would face consequences. Turkish Foreign Minister Çetin, warned the danger of an all-out Balkan war, claiming that this could be one of the greatest issues faced by the international community since the World Wars. Therefore, the goal of organizing this regional conference in Istanbul, was to forward two important messages to the international community: 1) In case that dialogue will not be effective tool in resolving the conflict in Bosnia, international community have to think about the option of military intervention; 2) To alert the international community for the risk of this conflict that could be spread to other countries of the Balkan region.¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, around twenty Turkish MP's, following the initiative of Abudllah Gül a member of the Welfare Party, submitted a proposal to the Council of Europe calling for Serbia's membership to be revoked.¹⁶⁰

Despite Turkey's image as the protector of Bosnians and their voice in international stage, Turkey also maintained good relations with Croatia. This could be seen during the conflict that happened among Bosnians and Croats in 1993. Turkey was a state where both Bosnians and Croats had full confidence, therefore they willingly accepted Turkish mediation. The contribution of Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin has been important, because both sides emphasized that when the negotiations reached the deadlock, Çetin was able to mediate successfully and to enable the talks to continue. Minister Çetin went in Sarajevo twice in order to be present during the negotiations between Bosnia and Croatia. The both sides publicly conveyed their gratitude for Turkey's efforts to help.¹⁶¹ After the ceasefire, the USA leadership intensified the talks for reconciliation between the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, aiming to establish a balance of military forces against Yugoslav People's Army. This diplomatic initiative was successful and both parties signed an agreement for the establishment of a Croat-Bosniak Federation on March 1, 1994.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War", 8-9.

¹⁶⁰ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 83.

¹⁶¹ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Ankara ve Berlin'in Bosna Savaşı'na", 69.

¹⁶² Nimet Beriker Atiyas, "Mediating Regional Conflicts and Negotiating Flexibility: Peace Efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina", *ANNALS*, Vol. 542, Issue 1 (1995): 186.

Turkey continued to further her diplomatic agenda, this time with realizing a visit by the Turkish Prime Minister, Tansu Çiller, and her Pakistani counterpart, Benazir Butto, in Sarajevo, in February, 1994. The purpose of this visit by Çiller and Butto was to express their solidarity with innocent civilians and to spread important message to the world that human rights must be protected and not be allowed to be violated by Serbian aggression. Çiller stated, "the world seems to have forgotten about the Bosnian people". The both stateswoman called upon the UN to lift the arms embargo in order for Bosnians to be protected by Serbian and Croatian paramilitary forces which were supplied with weapons by Croatia and Serbia. In the joint declaration in Sarajevo, the both leaders emphasized that:

"It is shocking that this appalling human tragedy is being enacted in the heart of a continent which prides itself on its commitment to human rights and respect for human dignity. A sovereign and independent state is being violently dismembered along racial lines and genocide perpetrated against a peaceful and enlightened people."¹⁶³

Çiller also described Sarajevo as a "bastion of the European ideal of different religions, nationalities and cultures living together in peace and exhibiting 'global' values worthy of the international community's heartfelt support."¹⁶⁴ During this visit, they met with Bosnian leadership, President Alija Izetbegović and Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić. Then they went on to visit the children's ward of the beleaguered Koševo Hospital. From this visit in BiH, both stateswomen harshly criticized the approach of international community, which was supposed to protect civilians from the war. Nearly all remaining people in Bosnia were dependent on humanitarian aid. In Turkey's perspective, one of the objectives of the Tansu Çiller's trip was to sensitize the Islamic world for things that are happening in Bosnia, which in that way would provoke stronger support for Bosnia. These diplomatic maneuvers by Turkey incensed the resentment among the Serbs who still remembered Ottoman Empire's 500-year occupation of the Balkans.¹⁶⁵

After the visit in Sarajevo, Çiller held a bilateral meeting with Franjo Tuđman, president of Croatia, in Zagreb. Tuđman requested to Çiller to help in organizing a summit between Croats and Bosnian Muslims, having faith that Turkey could convince

¹⁶³ Carol J. Williams, "Premiers of 2 Muslim Nations Visit Sarajevo", **Los Angeles Times**, 03.02.1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-02-03/news/mn-18687_1_muslim-families, [06.02.2018].

¹⁶⁴ **Ibid.**

¹⁶⁵ **Ibid.**

Izetbegović to take part in this summit. This request demonstrates the level of trust Croatia had with Turkey, considering it as a relevant factor which can help to establish contact with the Bosnian leadership. Turkey's attempt to mediate these talks proved to be successful. The both ethnic communities called for ceasefire in February of 1994. This situation prompted the USA to move forward with negotiations with the aim to achieve reconciliation between the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, aiming to establish a balance of military forces. This diplomatic initiative by the USA was successful and both parties signed an agreement for the establishing of a federation between them in March of 1994.¹⁶⁶ Appreciating Turkey's role, the USA invited Turkish leadership to Washington to be present at the signing ceremony of the federation agreement between the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats. The invitation by USA is considered to be an indication of Turkey's importance in the region and how her active role in the Bosnian conflict served to demonstrate her importance as a regional power in the region.¹⁶⁷

International community actors were aware that if peace were to be achieved in Bosnia, Turkey's support would be crucial. In this regard, the United Nation's Special Envoy Cyrus Vance, and EC representative Lord Owen, visited Turkey for discussions and consultation before proposing their plan to Bosnia. The same occurred with Thorwald Stoltenberg, who replaced Vance in May of 1993 as EC mediator. Stoltenberg went for a official visit to Turkey where he request from Turkish leadership to use their influence over the Bosnians to accept the plan proposed by EC. Minister Çetin declared that Turkey would be in communication with Izetbegović, aiming to provide peace as soon as possible. Additionally, he said that Turkey would fully support Izetbegović's policies regarding Bosnia.¹⁶⁸

For Turkish leadership since the beginning was clear that the most effective solution to end the oppression of Serbs in Bosnia, would be international military operation.¹⁶⁹ But, the international western community attempted to resolve the issues through dialogue,

¹⁶⁶ İlhan Uzgel, "The Balkans: Turkey's Stabilizing Role", **Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power**, ed. Barry Rubin, Kemal Kırıışçı (London: Lynne Rienner publishers, 2001): 53.

¹⁶⁷ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War", 10.

¹⁶⁸ Demirtaş, "Türkiye ve Balkanlar", 270.

¹⁶⁹ Ali Balcı, **Türkiye Dış Politikası, İlkeler, Aktörler, Uygulamalar**, (İstanbul: Etkileşim Yayınları, 2013), 223.

which proved inefficient. Turkey made sure to all that it was prepared to take part in any and all military operations in order to provide peace, order and stability in BiH. Finally:

“The UN Security Council resolution 816, adopted on March 31,1993, after reaffirming the resolutions of 781 (1992) and 786 (1992) concerning a ban on military flights over BiH and recognizing the current situation in the region, the Council, acting under Chapter VII of UN Charter, extended the ban to cover flights by all fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft over the country, and to use all measures necessary to ensure compliance with the ban”.¹⁷⁰

The resolution gave official permission to NATO planes to attack Serbian war planes in the instance of the violation of the no fly zone. NATO implement this decision on the April 12, 1993. Once implemented, NATO requested that Turkey send aircraft to the region, and they responded by sending eighteen F16 Turkish planes to monitor the zone. NATO's request towards Turkey was considered an acknowledgment of their power in the region and a detail of prestige in Turkish media.¹⁷¹

Turkey also deployed about 1450 Turkish peacekeeping troops, despite objections from Russia and Greece,in Bosnia starting on June 18th, 1994.¹⁷² UN officials stated that the Turkish peacekeeping soldiers would be positioned far from Serb front lines to avoid possible tension between them. The UN Protection Force spokesman, Matthew Nerzig, emphasized that “Peace keeping Turkish soldiers will be stationed in central Bosnia between Bosnian Croats and Muslims.”¹⁷³

From the second half of 1995 onward, the USA intensified her efforts to find a solution to the Bosnian issue. They continually sought Turkish support, especially in convincing the Bosnian side to agree to a peace deal. The National Security Advisor to the USA President, Anthony Lake, paid an visit in Turkey aiming to inform Turkish leadership of the new initiative the USA had, aiming to find a long lasting solution for the Bosnian issue. In September of 1995, USA Vice Foreign Minister, Richard Holbrooke, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović and Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhammet Šakirbey met in Ankara for trilateral talks. Holbrooke, through the mediation of Turkish leadership,

¹⁷⁰ Danesh Sarooshi, **The United Nations and the Development of Collective Security: the Delegation by the UN Security Council of its Chapter VII powers**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 268.

¹⁷¹ Demirtaş Coşkun, “Ankara ve Berlin’in Bosna Savaşı’na”, 70.

¹⁷² Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, 501.

¹⁷³ “Turkey Sends Troops to U.N. Bosnia Force”, **New York Times**, 06.19.1994,<http://www.nytimes.com/1994/06/19/world/turkey-sends-troops-to-un-bosnia-force.html>, [07.02.2018].

aimed to persuade the Bosnian leadership to be more cooperative in reaching a peace agreement. The leadership of Turkey emphasized the importance of maintaining BiH's territorial integrity, which USA Vice Foreign Minister also believed to be necessary. Holbrooke also stated that any peaceful solution regarding the Bosnian issue would need Turkey's participation. The visits of mediators and diplomats of great powers, like USA or EU in Turkey were seen as acknowledgement of Turkey's role in the Bosnian conflict.¹⁷⁴

The Serbs didn't take into account the warnings of UN and NATO, and continued with the attacking civilians. The culmination of these attacks were when two shells hit the central Sarajevo market called Markale, killing at least thirty-seven civilians, and injuring eighty others, in the single most brutal attack in Sarajevo. UN officials in the Bosnian capital claimed that the bombs were fired by Serbs and had caused the disastrous damages. This case, alerted NATO alliance who subsequently initiated the greatest military operation against the Bosnian-Serb forces called Operation Deliberate Force. NATO warplanes bombed Bosnian Serb positions to the south and east of the Sarajevo. At the early stage, the attacks seemed to be focused in places near to the Bosnian Serb headquarters in Pale, as an answer to the Serbian bombings of the Markale market in Sarajevo.¹⁷⁵ Turkey, after the last attack of Serbs in Sarajevo, once again stated their readiness to deploy military troops if the international community launched a joint attack. In the end, Turkish aircrafts were not part of the military operation, but contributed with providing air cover for the planes carrying out the bombing. Foreign Minister of Turkey, Erdal İnönü, stressed that this campaign was "A step in the right direction by the international community in order to protect the civilians."¹⁷⁶

Twenty years after the Bosnian war, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), issued some confidential documents regarding to the war in BiH. One document, written on the 8th of October, 1992, titled as a "Europe's View of the Use of Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina," states that:

¹⁷⁴ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War", 12.

¹⁷⁵ Roger Cohen, "Conflict in the Balkans: The Overview; NATO Jets Attack Serbian Positions Around Sarajevo", **New York Times**, 30.08.1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/30/world/conflict-balkans-overview-nato-jets-attack-serbian-positions-around-sarajevo.html?pagewanted=all>, [07.02.2018].

¹⁷⁶ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War", 13.

“Hungary, Bulgaria and especially Turkey advocate towards Western European countries within NATO and the UN to use military force in Bosnia in order to speed up the delivery of aid and impose a settlement among warring factions. The top Turkish army plans to deploy a battalion in BiH if the UN Security Council decides to intervene.” The document goes on to say that, “Turkey is putting pressure on allies to get UN approval for air strikes that would destroy the heavy artillery of Serbs in BiH. Ankara was ready to provide her air forces for these operations.”¹⁷⁷

These confidential documents illustrate how the international community did not or did not want to understand the seriousness of the conflict in BiH, and for this reason the attempt to end this war went very slowly. Despite the not so great interest of the western international community to resolve the Bosnian issue, Turkey was constantly making efforts to find a peace formula in BiH, while also offering humanitarian aid to the affected citizens and opening its borders to those wishing to take shelter. In doing so, Turkey imposed itself within the international community as a regional power to be reckoned with.¹⁷⁸

The NATO airstrikes proved to be effective, finally bringing the Serbs to the negotiating table. The leader of the Bosnians, Croats and Serbs, namely Alija Izetbegović, Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević commenced negotiations under the mediation of the USA administration in Dayton, Ohio on the November 1, 1995. They succeeded in reaching an agreement in two weeks. Turkish President Süleyman Demirel congratulated all three leaders on negotiating peace and putting an end to the war.¹⁷⁹

2.1.5.2. The Role of Turkey in the Secret Supply of Weapons during the Bosnian War

With the outbreak of the wars in Yugoslavia, on September 25, 1991 the UN passed the Security Council Resolution number 713, as an response to the conflicts happening in the BiH. In the resolution was emphasized that, “current situation is causing a heavy loss

¹⁷⁷ “CIA: Turska je Bila Najveći Zagovarač Vojne Intervencije u BiH”, **Klix**, 02.10.2013, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/cia-turska-je-bila-najveci-zagovarac-vojne-intervencije-u-bih/131002045>, [08.02.2018].

¹⁷⁸ Baskın Oran, “Türk Dış Politikası: Temel İlkeleri ve Soğuk Savaş Ertesindeki Durumu Üzerine Notlar”, **Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi**, Vol. 51, No.1 (1996): 363.

¹⁷⁹ Demirtaş Coşkun, “Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War”, 13.

of human life and material damage”, and therefore enacted an arms embargo on Yugoslavia for “all deliveries of weapons and military equipment”.¹⁸⁰

The UN embargo did not reduce the number of civilian killings in former Yugoslavian countries. In fact, the only beneficiary of the arms embargo was Milosević, because he controlled the fourth largest national army in Europe. The UN's decision to enforce the arms embargo ultimately prolonged the Bosnian war for two reasons. Firstly, the Serbs defeated other nations because they had control over the military and artillery of Yugoslav People's Army (Serbian: Југословенска народна армија). Secondly, throughout the length of the conflict, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats were supplied with weapons from Serbia and Croatia. On the other side Bosnian Muslims were poorly supplied with weapons and ammunition to protect themselves against aggressors. With the addition of the arms embargo enforced by the UN, Bosnians were left utterly defenseless. One could argue that if this decision was evaluated from different perspectives, the subsequent death toll and displacement numbers wouldn't be so high.¹⁸¹

In the first stage of the conflict, international community perceived the conflict as a civil war, and didn't have intention to intervene militarily against Serbs. Meanwhile, Turkey was of another mind and aimed to balance the forces on the ground by seeking to lift the arms embargo against Bosnians. The Turkish leadership thought that the UN's decision to place a weapons embargo against the whole Yugoslavia was more detrimental towards the Bosnian side, considering the Serbs had access to the remaining weapons of the JNA. Turkey focused their efforts on the USA administration, and in other international organizations, in an attempt to lift the arms embargo because it went to the detriment of the Bosnian Muslims. Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin stressed that the “UN decision for arms embargo created a situation in which it became almost impossible for the Bosnians to defend their place”.¹⁸² According to Çetin, “lifting the

¹⁸⁰ “UN arms embargo on Yugoslavia (FRY)”, **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute**, https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/yugoslavia/yugoslavia-1991, [08.02.2018].

¹⁸¹ Ogulturk, “Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War”, 205.

¹⁸² Demirtaş Coşkun, “Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War”, 9.

embargo was a moral responsibility for the world”.¹⁸³ At the summit of the OIC held in Karachi- Pakistan, on April 1993, Turkey with other OIC member states formulated a joint proposal for lifting the arms embargo against BiH. The proposal was accepted by all states present at the Summit, after which the OIC member states requested upon the UNSC to take all necessary measures as soon as possible.¹⁸⁴

Even after this call, there was no decision by the UN to lifting the arms embargo for BiH. The only option left to balance the power on the ground was secretly providing weapons to the Muslim Bosnian army.

Regarding the supply of the arms, it is said that this operation was led by USA, but, there were other states that directly supplied Bosnian Muslims with weapons. Former CIA Director, R. James Woolsey Jr, said that the CIA did not provided arms in BiH, but were willing to do so. Ultimately, the CIA didn't distribute arms because they had been warned of the negative reactions they would receive from other countries like Germany, France or Britain. If the USA violated the embargo, there would be no legitimacy to impose embargoes on other states. It is worth noting that in the operation of the secret supply of weapons to Bosnian Muslims, the USA was a major player behind the scenes. It has been argued that they merely turned a blind eye to the transfer of arms by the other states.¹⁸⁵

States with Muslim majority populations as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were the ones which mostly contributed to the supply of weapons and the necessary munitions to the Bosnian army. Malaysia also helped to the Bosnian army war efforts by surpassing the embargo through the trade shipping and the Malaysian UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) soldiers stationed in BiH.¹⁸⁶ Turkey also played an important role in helping the Bosnians acquire arms and had been involved in this operation since 1992, when Iran created a smuggling route to BiH. Bosnian leadership recognized that,“In

¹⁸³ **Ibid.**

¹⁸⁴ **Ibid.**

¹⁸⁵ Ekinci, “Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era”, 82.

¹⁸⁶ **Ibid**, 83

1993, a Turkish route existed through which weapons from Islamic countries were transferred to Bosnia”.¹⁸⁷

That Turkey has been a direct supplier of weapons to the Bosnian army we can refer to the meeting of Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganić with Turkish President Turgut Özal in 1993. In the framework of this meeting, according to Ganić, “The Turkish president had promised an aircraft full of weapons and munitions”.¹⁸⁸ A year later, in 1994, the CIA confessed that spy satellites had taken photos of an Iranian aircraft on Turkish airfields. The same aircraft was also pictured in Zagreb and other airports in Croatia, unloading shipments of arms. Turkish aircraft also flew directly to Tuzla. Additionally, by UNPROFOR representatives was assumed that Turkish aircraft has flown from “Cyprus” to Tuzla together with USA military team acting as intermediary.¹⁸⁹

It was obvious that the USA together with Turkey, provided support to the Bosnian Muslims. Additionally, the Turkish ship Turgut Reis, joined the NATO Western European Union (WEU) fleet, thus allowing to pass ships which provide weapons to the Bosnian Muslims.¹⁹⁰

This issue was followed closely by Turkish media. When journalists asked Turkish Foreign Minister Çetin whether there have been any help by Turkish side towards BiH for the weapons transfer, the Minister chose not to comment. However, this was later confirmed by the former Chief of the General Staff of Turkey, Doğan Güreş, who admit it in late 1994 that Turkey secretly supplied with weapons Bosnian army.¹⁹¹ This declaration had serious diplomatic repercussions, causing the minister of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, Vladimir Jovanović, to send a letter of complaint to the Secretary General of UN, about Turkey's attitude toward this issue.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

¹⁸⁸ **Ibid.**

¹⁸⁹ **Ibid.**

¹⁹⁰ Eroglu, “Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Balkans”, 26.

¹⁹¹ Demirtaş Coşkun, “Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Bosnian War”, 9.

¹⁹² Gencer Özcan, “Doksanlarda Türkiye'nin Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dış Politikasında Askeri Yapının Artan Etkisi”, **En Uzun Onyı Türkiye'nin Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dış Politika Gündeminde Doksanlı Yıllar**, ed. Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1998): 83.

Regarding Turkey's contribution of arms, the general of Bosnian Muslim army, Mustafa Polutak, stated that:

“Despite UN embargo, many friends has helped BiH. In this regard, we would like to express our gratitude to Turkey for all contributions that has made in this regard. Apart of moral support, Turkey helped BiH in every possible aspect. Many aircraft with weapons and munition flew from Turkish airports to our country, in order to meet the needs of the Bosnian army. I will not comment on how these helps were made. In this direction, all those who comment that Turkey has done nothing during the Bosnian war are malicious people”.¹⁹³

2.1.5.3. The Bosnian War in Turkish Parliamentary Debates

One indicator that shows Turkey's preoccupation with the Bosnian War, can be seen in their parliamentary debates that have taken place over the three years of conflict. During the debates, members of parliament have expressed their positions in the context of what would be the most appropriate option to end the suffering of Bosnians by Serbian aggression. Various proposals were made by Turkish MPs, from unilateral military intervention, various provisions of assistance, and even multilateral intervention through international organizations. The last proposal was pursued the most by Turkish leadership, who lobbied for it heavily amongst international platforms, expressing the urgency with which it should be applied.

During Bosnian conflict, four coalition governments served in Turkey. From November of 1991 until June of 1993, the Süleyman Demirel government was in power, consisting of the True Path Party (TPP) and the Social Democratic People's Party (SDPP). The second coalition government consisted of the same political parties present previously, serving an additional term from June of 1993 until October of 1995, under Tansu Çiller. SDPP later merged with the Republican People's Party (RPP) on the 18th of February, 1995, and from then the TPP – RPP coalition was formed. The third government, known as the second Çiller government, served just 25 days, from the 5th of October, 1995 until the 30th of November, 1995. Lastly, the fourth coalition saw Çiller again as prime minister, lasting from October of 1995 to March of 1996. This government consisted of a coalition between TPP and RPP. The parliamentary opposition parties were the Motherland Party (MP), the Democratic Left Party (DLP) the Nationalist Movement

¹⁹³ “Yugoslavya'nın Parçalanma Sürecinde Bosna'ya Saldırı ve Soykırım”, 20.11.2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boan4RMF7Vc>, [10.02.2018].

Party (NMP) and the Welfare Party (WP). Below, we will highlight the most prominent stances of Turkish MPs regarding the conflict in Bosnia.¹⁹⁴

During the first stage of the conflict in Bosnia, in April 1992, State Minister Akin Gönen (TPP) stated that Turkey at 6th of February 1992 officially recognized four new independent countries Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia which in past were part of former Yugoslavia. Bilateral relations with this new countries would be regulated by the Turkish embassy in Belgrade.¹⁹⁵

One week later, the Bosnian Deputy Prime Minister, Muhammed Čengić, gave a speech in the Turkish parliament stating what an honor and privilege it was to address the parliament. In his speech, Čengić expressed that he was saddened by the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the massacre of his people. With his speech, Čengić hoped to inform the Turkish government and the public of the tragedy happening in Bosnia. Čengić emphasized that Turkey is the only state that can help Bosnia to survive from the Serbian genocide. According to him, Bosnia wasn't looking for Turkey to intervene in the war, but petitioning for protection from Serbian aggression. Čengić's speech was delivered with a sense of urgency, claiming that if there wasn't immediate intervention, it was unlikely if the Bosnians nor the Bosnia state would survive.¹⁹⁶

In fact, the main purpose of the deputy prime minister's speech was to be the voice of all Bosnians in the Turkish parliament. Bosnians had the lack of trust of the UN and the EC over their empty promises to end the conflict in their country. That's why all the Bosnian "eyes" were directed towards the Turkish state, alluding that "The only state that can help us to survive from the Serbian genocide is Turkey". Minister Čengić, with his speech, it seems to convey the message to the Turkish people.¹⁹⁷

On the same day, Adnan Kahveci of the Motherland Party, declared that the government wouldn't take an active role because they operated under a new sort of diplomacy, the

¹⁹⁴ Didem Ekinci, "The War in Bosnia- Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates (1992-1995): A Constructivist Approach", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 6, No. 22 (Summer 2009): 38.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 42.

¹⁹⁶ TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 75.Birleşim, 19. Dönem, Vol. 11 (12.05.1992): 21-23.

¹⁹⁷ Fahriye Emgili, "Bosna Hersek Trajedisinde (1992-1995) Türk Birliği", *Güney Dogu Avrupa Arastirmali Dergisi*, No. 21 (2012): 70.

“declaration diplomacy”, meaning the talks and statements from the Turkish government were just that, statements, and nothing more.¹⁹⁸

In the same session, Mustafa Baş of the Welfare Party, proposed that military action be taken, by sending troops to BiH. He went on to state that, if the conflict in Bosnia continues, places like Sancak or Kosovo could have repercussions. Baş believed it to be Turkey’s duty to provide either monetary or military aid to the Bosnians. He supported the initiative of Abdullah Gül, MP of the Welfare Party, that suggested the Council of Europe remove Serbia as a member of the organization.¹⁹⁹

The parliamentary session continued with Ismail Cem, representing the Social Democratic People’s Party. According to Cem, the situation in Bosnia was purely massacre and not “war”, going on to say that Turkey calling upon various international organizations was futile. To Cem and the SDDP, the biggest problem was the failure to deliver humanitarian aid. He proposed following in the European Community’s footsteps by withdrawing the Turkish ambassador from Serbia. As for the issue of secret supplies of weapons, Cem saw it as a maneuver that would only intensify the conflict in Bosnia and nothing else.²⁰⁰

Continuing the debate regarding the weapons, Coşkun Kırca of True Path Party, declared that “this issue shouldn’t even be mentioned either by the government or the opposition”.²⁰¹ According to him, “If there is or if there will be weapons procurement, it would be known years later because their transfer and use are confidential issues.”²⁰² Kırca proposed that Turkey have to request that Serbia to not to represent former Yugoslavia amongst international organizations, nor the Western states not to recognize it as a successor of Yugoslavia. Proposal number two by Kırca was that Turkey have to cut off diplomatic relations with Serbia. Third, Turkey have to call UN Security Council

¹⁹⁸ Ekinci, “Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era“, 81.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 82-83.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*.

²⁰² *Ibid*.

to impose trade, communication and transportation embargo against Serbia. Lastly, NATO must start to talk about possible military operation against Serbia.²⁰³

After deputy Kırca, Vehbi Dinçerler from Motherland Party declared that to lead the presidency of a Council of Europe Committee of Ministers from Turkey, express a big responsibility and a serious test in terms of contributing to the resolution of the conflict in BiH. After the statements from the Motherland Party, Deputy Prime Minister, Erdal İnönü of the SDPP, criticized the MP's who used the war of BiH as an tool for domestic politics.”²⁰⁴ He also emphasized that Turkey didn't acted belatedly, referring to the statement of Kahveci. İnönü declared that even before the conflict started, “an official delegation from Turkey was sent to the region to submit Turkey's concerns”.²⁰⁵ Additionally, he stated that Turkey raised Bosnian issue several times in international discourse, particularly in the OSCE and UNSC. The Foreign Minister had also sent a letter to the OIC for resource allocation, that was approved by the Islamic Development Bank for an amount of one million USD for the needs of the Bosnians.²⁰⁶

The debate over the Bosnian war continued on the 20th of May, 1992. Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin explained that Turkey's efforts were focused on providing medicine and food and petitioned for the airport in Sarajevo to be opened under the observation of international organizations. After Çetin, Mesut Yılmaz of the Motherland Party declared that there had been a misunderstanding between the Motherland Party and the government in regards to sending military troops towards Bosnia. Yılmaz stated that his party never supported a Turkey's unilateral intervention in the war of BiH. For them, any diplomatic solution will be supported which the government will propose. Additionally Yılmaz emphasized that in a situation where the parliament could openly debate over the multilateral intervention, the MP would give green light for the decision to send troops to BiH. In the same discussion, Bülent Ecevit from the Democratic Left Party (DLP) stated that he never was in favor of the unilateral intervention of Turkey in the Bosnian war. He also suggested that, “Turkey should immediately call upon all countries of

²⁰³ **Ibid**, 83-84.

²⁰⁴ **Ibid**, 85.

²⁰⁵ **Ibid**.

²⁰⁶ **Ibid**.

former Yugoslavia to gather in Istanbul, without representatives of the EC, to discuss how to move forward.”²⁰⁷

After the session on the 20th of May, 1992, the next parliamentary session dedicated to the issue of BiH was held on the 25th of August, 1992. In this session, the government received heavy criticism regarding the Bosnian issue. Kamran Inan (MP) warned that the situation will create a spillover effect in surrounding countries, like Albania and Macedonia, which could sink into the conflict leading to a Third Balkan War. Therefore, according to Inan, “the most effective strategy for putting an end to this war was to issue an ultimatum to Serbia, giving it twenty-four hours to ceasefire”.²⁰⁸ If the Serbs didn’t accept these terms, the next step would be to carry out a military operation. Inan believed that Turkey had the moral responsibility to represent this issue and therefore pressured Ankara to spearhead it, mainly referring to bring the attention of the USA Congress and European states, who he believed did not realise the severity of the conflict. Amongst the hardest critics towards the government came from Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party. Erbakan said that the government was late in convening parliament, and as a result BiH was almost totally destroyed. He mentioned a causal link between the events in BiH and the influence of “certain Zionist and other elements” that propagate the idea that Muslims should be erased from Europe.²⁰⁹

In response to this criticism, İnönü replied that Turkey had been active with different initiatives in international arena. He mentioned that, “Turkey held the presidency of Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, the OIC, and the group of Islamic countries at the UN”.²¹⁰ Turkey’s contribution also was based on Bosnia’s recognition from many countries and acceptance of the UN as its new member.²¹¹

After the parliamentary discussions of 25th of August, 1992 came to a close, certain conclusions were drawn:

²⁰⁷ Ekinci, “The War in Bosnia- Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates”, 44-45.

²⁰⁸ **Ibid**, 45.

²⁰⁹ **Ibid**, 45-46.

²¹⁰ Ekinci, “Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era“, 91.

²¹¹ **Ibid**.

“1)The parliament does not accept any change by force in the boundaries and territorial integrity of Bosnia;

2) The parliament is in solidarity and is prepared to extend aid toward Bosnian Muslims that are faced with one of the most severe massacres in history;

3) The parliament considers it necessary to use force to end Serbian attacks as a humanitarian and peace duty.”²¹²

The next session regarding the Bosnian issue was held in September of 1992. The session was opened by Adnan Kahveci's. Kahveci again used his time to criticize the government. He to his fellow MPs, conveyed a conversation realized with one army commander from Bosnia, stating that Bosnians had 5,000 soldiers ready to fight but they were without weapons and other necessary equipment. In the course of his speech, he stressed that Turkey could give the Bosnians arms for defense and open the \$35 million credit at the Eximbank. Regarding weapons delivery, he immediately received a negative response from the Minister of Defense.²¹³

In December of 1992, the parliament voted in favor of giving full authority to the government to contribute in UNPROFOR according to Resolution 743, the deployment of troops in foreign countries.²¹⁴ In January of 1993, Atilla Mutman from the Social Democratic Populist Party stressed that Turkey would not take a step toward unilateral military intervention in the war. Mutman declared that any attack outside of the UN framework would not be legitimate. Additionally, Turkey would have to request flight permission from its neighbor, Bulgaria, as well as a lift of the blockade in the Adriatic Sea.²¹⁵

At the end of 1994, when the conflict reached its climax, MP Vehbi Dinçerler put forward a list of suggestions:

²¹² **Ibid**, 92.

²¹³ **Ibid**, 93-94.

²¹⁴ Emgili, “Bosna Hersek Trajedisinde”, 71.

²¹⁵ Ekinci, “The War in Bosnia- Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates“, 49.

“First it should be set up a sub-commissions in the Parliament to follow up closely the developments in Bosnia; Second, a research commission should be established, that would undertake on-site research as almost all of the representatives of NATO member states did in Bihac; Third, a joint action commission should be formed to coordinate steps that would be taken by the government and the military. Fourth, a delegation should be formed to facilitate the follow-up activities and coordination of state efforts to be directed by the President himself.”²¹⁶

These suggestions were welcomed by the speaker of Parliament.²¹⁷

The Bosnia Inquiry Commission was established in December of 1994 and began investigations in Turkey, Bosnia and Croatia, aiming to provide assistance to the Turkish deputies. The research was realized in February of 1995. The first stop was Croatia, where the Commission had meetings with the highest representatives of the Croatian state and Ambassador Yasushi Akashi of the UN. Representatives of the Commission shared their worries regarding the safe delivery of aid to Bosnia through Croatia. Next the Commission travelled to BiH where they met with the Speaker of the Bosnian Assembly, the Speaker of the Federal Assembly, the Prime Minister, and President Alija Izetbegović.²¹⁸

After the assassination of the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Irfan Lubjankić, in June of 1995, Abdullah Gül of the Welfare Party stressed that based on Turkey's potential it did not make all the necessary efforts on the Bosnia issue. At the same period, NATO and UN defense ministers and chiefs of staff gathered in Paris to talk urgently about possible military operation, with an army of 4,000 soldiers. Defense Minister, Mehmet Gölhan stated that Turkey would also contribute with F-16 fighter aircrafts in this multinational intervention force.²¹⁹

The stances of Turkish MPs in the framework of the debates in the Turkish Parliament regarding the Bosnian war were varied. The opposition parties attacked the government for the lack of concrete steps taken to prevent the massacre that took place in Bosnia. They were in favor of providing various aid, even the delivery of weapons, despite the UN embargo on arms. On the other hand, government representatives claimed that Turkey had been very active in the issue of BiH, especially in critical periods of the war.

²¹⁶ **Ibid.**

²¹⁷ **Ibid**,51.

²¹⁸ Ekinci,“Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era“, 105-106.

²¹⁹ **Ibid**, 107.

Representatives of the Turkish government have stressed the diplomatic route taken in various international organizations with the aim to find a solution to the problem, adding that Turkey had offered a plan to overcome the crisis. In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been one of the most relevant issues in Turkish foreign policy from 1992-1995.

2.1.6. Intensification of Turkey's Bilateral Relations with New Sovereign States of Former Yugoslavia and other Balkan Countries

Changes in the international system and the developments in the 1990's in Balkan region gave Turkey space to exert active diplomacy at the regional and global level.

Turkey is a country that has always opened their doors to people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Today, one can find a large number of ethnic communities originating from the Balkans, such as Bosnians, Albanians and Torbesh. These ethnic communities came to Turkey at different times and for various reasons. After the Cold War, a significant number of people from this region relocated to Turkey for professional, health and education purposes. The same applies for Turkish citizens located in different Balkan countries. All this, increases the potential for cooperation between the Western Balkan states and Turkey. The relationship between people through different forms, such as educational, non-governmental organizations, various cultural activities, and cooperation among municipalities at the local level, is a good argument for the Turkish leadership to have an active diplomacy in the Balkans.²²⁰

Another important determinant of Turkey's active diplomacy during the 1990's, were the strategic interests that Turkey shared with the USA. The common vision of the two states, for the Balkans, was determined by some factors. Firstly, the pretensions of the newly created states from former Yugoslavia who moved into a liberal democracy system intended to have strategic relations with USA. The USA government understood the importance of utilizing Turkey's religious, cultural and historical ties in this region to establish relationship with the newly formed countries. Besides the common interest

²²⁰ Muharrem Gürkaynak, "Türk Dış Politikasında Batı Balkanlar: Dostluk ve İşbirliği Üzerine", **Çerçeve**, No. 62 (2013): 125.

held by Turkey and the USA towards the Balkans, Greece was also a factor in determining Turkish diplomacy in the Balkans. Greece's main interest was to weaken Turkey's factorization both regionally and globally. By activating its lobby groups in the USA, as well as intensifying relations with countries such as Russia, Armenia, Iran and Syria, Greece wanted to minimize Turkey's influence during the 1990s. But on the other hand, taking into consideration Greece's stance, Turkey has made enormous efforts in the path of developing its relations with the Balkan countries, especially with Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania. Lastly, Turkish and Muslim minorities that have centuries-old history in this region can be counted among the most influential determinants contributing to Turkey's active approach in the region.²²¹ In addition to Turkey's active approach to the Bosnian conflict, Turkey, as noted earlier, has intensified relations with other countries in the Balkan region after the Cold War period. As a result, Turkish-Macedonian, Turkish-Croat and Turkish-Slovenian, Turkish-Albanian relations will be analyzed during the beginning 1990s.

2.1.6.1. Bilateral Relations of Turkey with Macedonia

After the decision of Slovenia and Croatia to split from the Yugoslav federation, soon later other countries followed the same path. The case was with Macedonia, that on January 25, 1991 in its parliament adopted the Sovereignty Declaration and two days later appointed Kiro Gligorov as its president. Between the 9th-11th of July, 1991, President Kiro Gligorov paid a visit in Turkey in order to ask for Turkey's support regarding the independence of Macedonia.²²² During this visit Gligorov met with Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, Minister of Foreign Affairs Safa Giray, Minister of State and Deputy Prime Minister Ekrem Pakdemirli and with the with President Turgut Özal. Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister, Safa Giray, during his official visit to Belgrade

²²¹ Ali, "Надворешна Политика на Турција", 174-176.

²²² Former ambassador Trajan Petrovski, who served as ambassador of Yugoslavia but also as the first ambassador of Macedonia to Turkey, have declared that this visit was especially important in terms of assessing the will to support and recognize Republic of Macedonia as an independent and sovereign state, in case that all attempts for a reasonable solution for the survival of the federation fail. According to Petrovski, Turkey was an important country in that process. Ankara was in principle against the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but promised that if that proved to be impossible, it would immediately declare recognition of Macedonia and all other republics that would demand it. At the same time Turkey offered all kinds of help. Trajan Petrovski, "Независноста на Македонија - Првостепена Задача", *Дипломатски Летопис*, ed. Dancho Markovski, (Скопје: Дипломатски Клуб, 2016): 21.

used the opportunity to visit Sarajevo and Skopje. His stance was that current crisis in Yugoslavia was an internal issue and should therefore be resolved internally, preserving its territorial integrity. But after the circumstances changed it became clear for Turkey that the preservation of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia was impossible. Turkey initially was waiting the reactions of international community regarding the recognition of the new states. When the recognition of new states came from the European Community on January 17th, 1992, Turkey announced that they would also recognize these states, on the same day. It should be noted that since the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, Macedonia has been in constant communication with Turkey. After they declared independence on the 8th of September, 1991, Foreign Minister of Macedonia, Denko Maleski, together with Parliament Speaker, Stojan Andov, visited Ankara in October of that same year, aiming to convince Turkey to recognize Macedonia's independence. During his first visit to Davos, Prime Minister Demirel met with Macedonian leadership. In Davos, Demirel also met Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, and made known the need for recognition of Macedonia's independence. Finally, on February 6th, 1992, Turkey officially recognized the independence of four states; Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Six months later on the 26th of August, 1992, at the London conference that was organized to find a solution in order to overcome the conflict in BiH, Turkey signed a protocol with the 4 new states to establish diplomatic relations. Macedonia's first ambassador to Turkey was Trajan Petkovski. The first Turkish embassy established after the collapse of Yugoslavia, was opened in Skopje in 1993. Turkey's first ambassador at the time was Süha Noyan.²²³

After establishing diplomatic relations, Turkey supported Macedonia in the problem with Greece over its constitutional name. Having recognized Macedonia as independent country, Turkey also recognized its constitutional name, that even today holds cultural significance amongst Macedonians. Additionally, Turkey has defended the territorial integrity of Macedonia and has supported its unitary state concept; the multiethnic and multi-religious society that was a characteristic of this state. Macedonia is characterized by diversity of ethnicities such as; Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs,

²²³ Reyhan Rahman, "Makedonya'da Türk Azınlık ve Makedonya-Türkiye ilişkileri", (Master thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2012), 127-133.

Bosnians, and Roma. It also boasts diversity amongst religions, such as Orthodox, Catholic and Islam. After declaring independence, Macedonia was immediately met with resistance from its neighboring countries. Bulgarians accepted Macedonia as a state, but not as a nation. Greece didn't accept her constitutional name, and Serbia didn't accepted the autocephaly of the Macedonian church. While there were no outright problems with Albania, the lack of rights for Albanian citizens in Macedonia was worrying. Facing with this situation, Macedonia saw the only shelter and support at the regional level in Turkey. Characteristic were the frequent official visits between the two states, including the visits of the prime ministers, presidents and Parliament speakers. The first official visit was realized by Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov in March 1992, while a year later in 1993 Turkish President Turgu Özal visited Macedonia. In 1995 Turkish President Sulejman Demirel visited Skopje and signed the "Friendship and Cooperation Agreement", which included the mutual trust, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non interference in internal affairs and so on. This agreement is passable even today.²²⁴

As for the fields of cooperation, military relations were more intensified. The military relation started with the signing of the Security Protocol on May 18, 1992. Turkey's biggest support toward Macedonia in the military segment was on education and logistic support. Military Training and Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1994. While in April 1995, between two countries was signed the Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement. As a result of these agreements, Turkey donated 20% of its US-F-5 military aircraft to Macedonia. The number of long-term military personnel participating in the military academy in various areas is estimated to be over 82 military staff. Also in short-term courses around 550 military staff has participated in the framework of the Center for Partnership for Peace and the Center for Fighting Terrorism.²²⁵ On behalf of great military relations between both countries, former Defense Minister of Macedonia Zoran Jolevski state that:

²²⁴ Amet Dervishev, "Türkiye - Makedonya İlişkileri 1990-2015", (Master thesis, Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2016), 35-37.

²²⁵ Şeyma Adıyaman, "Türkiye-Makedonya İlişkileri", **Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi**, 22 February 2012, <http://www.bilgesam.org/incele/138/-turkiye-makedonya-iliskileri/#.WrOQ7GpzbDe>, [21.03.2018].

“The Republic of Turkey was among first countries which send a military attaché in the Republic of Macedonia, signed a Cooperation Agreement, received officers from the Republic of Macedonia for education, and assisted in equipping the Army of the Republic of Macedonia. Republic of Turkey is among the largest donors of ARM equipment.”²²⁶

Regarding the field of education, in this period Turkey has been active through the project "Big Student Project" in which every year provided scholarship for undergraduate and post-graduate students from Macedonia. Students who were admitted to study in Turkey were not obliged to enter the entrance examination. The project for the admission of international students over time has developed even more in the framework of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB).²²⁷

In cultural relations it should be emphasized that the preservation, maintenance and repair of nearly 500 Turkish cultural heritage piece of work were important part of the relations between this two countries. In this context Turkish institution like Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Presidency of Religious Affairs and TİKA have taken the responsibility to implement these projects.²²⁸

2.1.6.2. Bilateral Relations of Turkey with Albania

Based on indicators such as historical, religious, cultural and kinship ties, certain Balkan countries are considered as natural allies for Turkey. Among them is Albania. On the other hand, Albania that had just emerged from the ruins of the communist system and from the isolation of more than four decades, was strongly interested in establishing bilateral relations with countries like Turkey. The beginning of 1990's was marked with the intensification of the relations between Albania and Turkey focusing on initiating cooperation in economic and military issues. The frequent visits of leadership of these states were characteristic of their relationship. In these visits, the exchange of

²²⁶ “Јолевски во Битола: Односите меѓу Македонија и Турција Треба да Бидат Пример за Соработка во Регионот”, **Република Македонија Министерство за Одбрана**, 13.03.2017, <http://morm.gov.mk/?mainnews=promocija-na-kniga-tursko-makedonski-odnosi-niz-istorijata-13-03-2017&lang=mk>, [21.03.2018].

²²⁷ “Türkiye-Makedonya Cumhuriyeti Siyasi İlişkileri”, **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışışleri Bakanlığı**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-makedonya-cumhuriyeti-siyasi-iliskileri-.tr.mfa>, [02.03.2018].

²²⁸ **Ibid.**

experiences and ideas and the signature of agreements on several issues strengthened even more the relations Turkey and Albania.²²⁹

Having in mind the sensitive situation in Albania in almost every segment of daily life, there was a need for support in order to stabilize the country with the basic needs. Albanian leadership in 1990 asked TEK (Turkish Electricity Institute) for an electricity supply of 150 million kw. In the same year Turgut Özal and his counterpart Ramiz Alia had contacts in late September. The sensitive situation of Albania in 1990 didn't include just the economic field, it was also the need for urgent diplomatic and humanitarian support, where Turkey offered assistance in this regard. Turkey supported Albania's membership in European organizations, provided military, judicial and diplomatic support and through the program for international students accepted Albanian students in Turkish universities. This form of assistance represent the model of cooperation between the two strategic allies.²³⁰

During this period, Albania sought any kind of support by Turkey for membership into international organizations. In this regard, among the first memberships of Albania in the regional organizations was the BSEC. Albania is considered as one of the founders of the BSEC. In this regard, Turkey has played a great role for Albania's admission in BSEC. Meanwhile, during 1992, Albania applied for membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation where it was also accepted.²³¹

In June 1992 Süleyman Demirel paid a visit in Albania. During this visit was signed the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation. On this occasion the Turkish leadership stated that it would extend \$ 50 million humanitarian and technical aid to Albania. Two months later, in August 1992 Turkey and Albania signed the public safety cooperation protocol. Turkish President Turgut Özal paid a visit in February 1993 in Albania. During this visit Özal suggested to the Albanian leadership to prepare a 15-year plan wich will aim to develop tourism and service sectors as well as to improve her relations with its

²²⁹ Mehmed Sülkü, "Political Relations Between Turkey and Albania in the Post Cold War Period", (Master thesis, Middle East Technical University Graduate School of Social Sciences, February 2010), 65-66.

²³⁰ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 155.

²³¹ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", 502.

neighbor Macedonia. In the same year 1993, Albanian Prime Minister Aleksander Meksi made official visit to Turkey. While in 1994, Albanian President Sali Berisha paid a official visit Turkey soughting support by Turkish leadership in the economic and security field as well as for Albanian integration in NATO.²³²

Regarding the military field, relations between the two countries have been developing rapidly since the 1990s. The Chief of General Staff of Turkey visited Albania in November 1991, while a military co-operation agreement between the two countries was signed on 29 July 1992. In early 1993, the Minister of Defense of Albania went for a visit in Turkey. During the meeting with his counterpart he emphasized the needs of Albania for military equipment and the restructuring of the Albanian Army. Turkey responded positively to this request and immediately started a military education program. Part of the Albanian officers participated in this program, while some Turkish officers went to Albania to train the Albanian Command Brigade and Presidential Guard. Through this program, the military personnel and nearly 600 Albanian soldiers recieved the training.²³³

The frequent visits between two states and the start of co-operation in various fields, for Turkish authorities was considered an imperative obligation to assist "friendly Albania" in the efforts to develop the country. In the coming years, hundreds of Albanian officers were trained in Turkish military schools. Turkey is also the first state that has regularly sent its attaches to Albania.²³⁴

After 1995, Greece began to balance somehow the influence of Turkey in this country and the bilateral relations between Turkey and Albania lost momentum. This lasted until the beginning of 2000's when the equilibriums changed again, both regionally and globally. This change, in perspective of Turkey's strategic interests especially in the Balkan countries was more than welcomed.

²³² Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 156.

²³³ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", 503.

²³⁴ Gürkan Akyol, "Balkan Politikasında Arnavutluk (1912 Sonrası)", (Master thesis. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2007), 74.

2.1.6.3. Bilateral Relations of Turkey with Croatia and Slovenia

The crucial moment of the breakup of Yugoslavia was the announcement of independence by Croatia and Slovenia on June 25, 1991. At the beginning, the Yugoslav Army tried to intervene in these two countries, which lasted around one year in Croatia, and no more than one week in Slovenia. After a high political pressure that Germany placed to the European Community on January 15, 1992, EC (Today's EU) states recognized the independence of these countries. After the EC states, Turkey recognized these countries too. Regarding the relations with Croatia, during the Bosnian conflict, Turkey was one of the most active players that made enormous efforts in finding a mutually acceptable formula to pass the crisis between Croats and Bosnians. Turkish leadership had an important role in the ceasefire between the Croats and Bosnians in 1993. Soon thereafter, the Washington Treaty established the Bosnian-Croat Federation.²³⁵

Whereas regarding the Turkish-Slovenian relations during the 1990s, it should be stressed that Slovenia was among important countries for Turkish foreign policy. Namely, this country played an important role in the entry of Turkish exports into the European trade market. Also it was important for the Turkish citizens working and living in the European countries. For them, Slovenia was the first Balkan state that represent a key transit route through which they have to pass to move towards Turkey. It is worth mentioning that Turkey has made significant efforts for Slovenia on the path of integration into the NATO Alliance.²³⁶

It can be said that Turkey's policy in the Balkans during the first part of 1990s, was focused on supporting for creating a space for long-standing peace and stability for the new sovereign countries, helping them to progress in free economic market and strong support for the integration in the international organizations, which was one of the main strategic objectives of their foreign policies.²³⁷

²³⁵ Ali, "Надворешна Политика на Турција", 183.

²³⁶ **Ibid.**

²³⁷ Osman Metin Öztürk, "Türk Dış Politikasında Balkanlar", **Balkan Diplomasisi**, ed. Ömer E. Lütem, Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun (Ankara: Asam Yayınları, 2001): 28.

2.1.7. Establishment of the Black Sea Economic Organization and Membership of the Western Balkan Countries in the BSEC

During the 1990's Turkish foreign policy started to have a new approach and vision in the regional and global context. Taking into consideration the changes in international system, Turkish leaders were of the opinion that suitable conditions existed to take initiatives and to be imposed as new regional power. For that purpose, one of the most prominent initiatives which it took at the beginning of 1990's was the establishment of Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The brainchild of this project initially came by Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ideator of this initiative is considered to be Şükrü Elekdağ. This idea gave to Turkish leadership the motivation to push this project forward aiming to extend the Turkish influence through the methods of soft power into Black Sea region, and additionally to opening up to the other regions like the Balkans and Caucasus.²³⁸

The creation of BSEC aimed to increase the Turkish influence in regional context and also to counteract Turkey's possible marginalization in NATO with the end of the Cold War.²³⁹ Beside this argument, BSEC brings together around 300 million people and can replicate the model of European Union integraton.²⁴⁰

In this context, the first meeting that gave positive signs towards establishing a "Economic Cooperation in Black Sea region" was realized with a initiative of Ankara in 1990. Countries that were present in this meeting were Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgiam, Moldova and Turkey as a host. One year later, in 1991, the next meetings at the level of Ministries for Foreign Affairs were realized in Bucharest, Sofia and Moscow aiming to finalize the agreement text of the BSEC.²⁴¹ On June 25, 1992 the Heads of State and Government of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine met in

²³⁸ Erik J Zürcher, **Turkey: A Modern History**, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 332.

²³⁹ Kemal H Karpat, **Studies on Turkish Politics and Society: Selected Articles and Essays**, (Leiden & Boston: BRILL, 2004), 583.

²⁴⁰ Yusuf Çınar, "Turgut Özal ve AK Parti Dönemi Türk Dış Politikasına Teorik Bir Bakış Örneği: Liberal Düşüncenin Türk Dış Politikasına Etkisi", **Akademik Bakış Dergisi**, No. 26 (September – October 2011): 11.

²⁴¹ Davut Han Aslan, Muhammadqosim Sharapov, "Turkey and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)", **Zeszyty Naukowe Uczelni Vistula**, No. 34 (2014): 128.

Istanbul and signed the Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Bosphorus Statement.²⁴² In the Bosphorus statement was emphasized that:

“BSEC represent the beginning of a new partnership between the state members inspired by the values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. The leadership of member states saw this initiative as opportunity to realize concrete schemes of cooperative action that would contribute directly to the well-being and prosperity of their peoples and the region.”²⁴³

Seven years later, more exactly on June 1998, at the summit of Yalta was signed the BSEC charter. While in May 1999, the charter entered into force, officially making BSEC a regional organization.

In the BSEC charter is stated that the basic idea of creating of this organization is to unite the countries of Black Sea region in order to create a opportunity for economic collaboration which can avoid possible conflicts in this region. It seems that the goal of the organization was to follow the steps of EU concept which instead of conflicts preferred economic cooperation which will enable peace, stability and prosperity. Besides the states of Black Sea region countries from other regions like Balkans for example were part of the BSEC. This was case with Albania, Greece, Serbia and Macedonia. While the status of observers of the organization have countries like Austria, Belarus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Tunisia, the United States of America, and the European Union. Additionally countries like Cyprus and Montenegro applied in the organization for membership but their application was refused by Turkey and Greece.²⁴⁴

The mission of BSEC countries is to promote democratization through economic cooperation. So, the idea of BSEC is that countries have to cooperate each other in order to develop peace, prosperity and stability and creating opportunities for economic cooperation in the region by increasing trade in goods and services among the states. In

²⁴² “The Bosphorus Statement - Istanbul, 25 June 1992”, <http://www.bsecorganization.org/UploadedDocuments/BsecAtAGlance/1992%20Bosphorus.pdf>, [18.03.2018].

²⁴³ **Ibid.**

²⁴⁴ Anastasiia Gavuk, “Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Basin”, **Economy and Sociology: Theoretical and Scientific Journal**, Issue 2 (2015): 115-116.

the visionary perspective the idea is to create a free movement zone for people, goods, and capital similar to that of the European Union.²⁴⁵

In the agreements of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, it can be noticed that the main scope and objectives of the organization are:

- “To act in spirit of friendship and good neighborhood
- To strengthen mutual respect, trust, dialogue and cooperation among member states
- To develop and diversify bilateral and multilateral cooperation based on principles of international law
- To improve business environment and to promote individual and collective endeavors of companies in the process of economic cooperation
- To consider specific economic conditions and interests of the member states
- To develop cooperation among the member states in a positive way so as not to prevent their further economic relations with other states
- To encourage other states to take part in the cooperation”.²⁴⁶

2.1.7.1. Institutional Structure of BSEC

The founding members of BSEC agreed that main decision making body to be Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Chairmanship of the BSEC is foreseen to meet regularly every six months, in May / June and November / December in the Chairman's country. In case there is an urgent topic that needs to be discussed, it can be realized upon the request of one or more of the member states. The Chairmanship of BSEC is organized in a English alphabetical order for a six month period, starting from January 1st and July 1st. Committee of Senior Officials is another body which meets twice in the course of chairmanship period. This body corresponds to the Council of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and acts on behalf of it. The committee's main duties are to analyze the current important problems, to propose solutions and policies how to resolve them and to submit to the Council. Permanent International Secretariat is another body with her offices in Istanbul. It works under the coordination of the Chairman in office and offers secretarial services for BSEC under the direct management of the General Secretary. The main duty of the Secretariat is to implement the decisions and resolutions of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. BSEC also has other independent bodies such as “The Parliamentary Assembly, BSEC Business Council, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, the International Center for Black Sea Studies” which are related to

²⁴⁵ Aslan, Sharapov, “Turkey and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation”, 129.

²⁴⁶ **Ibid**, 129.

BSEC.²⁴⁷ Within the BSEC there are a large number of working groups in various fields in order to facilitate coordination and cooperation of member countries. The BSEC working groups can be seen below:

"BSEC Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry (WGAAI), BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance (WGBF), BSEC Working Group on Budgetary and Financial Issues (WGBFI), BSEC Working Group on BSEC-EU Interaction (WGBSEC-EU), BSEC Working Group on Combating Crime (WGCC), BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism (WGCT), BSEC Working Group on Culture (WGC), BSEC Working Group on Customs Matters (WGCM), BSEC Working Group on Education (WGE), BSEC Working Group on Emergency Assistance (WGEA), BSEC Working Group on Energy (WGE), BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection (WGEP), BSEC Working Group on Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals (WGHP), BSEC Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies (WGICT), BSEC Working Group on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance (WGIRGG), BSEC Working Group on Organizational Matters (WGOM), BSEC Working Group on Science and Technology (WGST), BSEC Working Group on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (WGSMEs), BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism (WGCT), BSEC Working Group on Transport (WGT), BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development (WGTED)."²⁴⁸

2.1.7.2. Impact of BSEC on the Turkish Foreign Policy

Establishing the BSEC was an important step and a important achievement of Turkey. The BSEC was the first regional organization in the Black Sea region, but also in the East bloc after the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. With this initiative Turkey testified that has the capacity of regional leadership that can push different processes. In the Balkans, in attempt to stop the war and to achieve long term peace in BiH, Turkey made a diplomatic offensive on the international platforms. While in the Black Sea region launched the first initiative to establish an economic organization that would have the possible spill over effect in other fields. Such a model was applied in the European Union which proved to be successful. But, the purpose of Turkey with this initiative was not to make EU rivalry, but the primary goal was to boost the countries of the socialist bloc in the liberal economy. In case that one day member states of BSEC have ambitions to become a member of Euro-Atlantic structures, they will have already the experience gained in the BSEC. In the BSEC organization apart of the states from the Black Sea, Balkan countries such as Greece, Albania, Serbia and lastly Macedonia joined in the organization. With this was opened automatically the possibility of cooperation of different regions, such as the Balkans, the Black Sea and the Caucasus region.

²⁴⁷ Aurelia Constanța Chitiba, "Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Short and Medium Term Prospects", **Knowledge Horizons – Economics**, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2016): 15.

²⁴⁸ Aslan, Sharapov, "Turkey and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation", 130-131.

Balkan countries as members of the BSEC have a multiple benefits. This means that the benefits from BSEC are not only related to the membership and potential economic cooperation between member states, but also the realization of joint projects. This was proved with the establishment of the Project Development Fund on October 25, 2002 through the adoption of the resolution of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Twenty-four projects have been approved since 2003 under the Project Development Fund in the fields of agriculture and agro-industry, education, environmental protection, health and pharmaceuticals, energy, science and technology. From these projects, twenty-one have been completed and three are ongoing. The Project Development Fund can provide budget of up to 30,000 euros for partner projects (for public and private agencies) from at least three BSEC member states, so that they can conduct preliminary feasibility studies for development projects.²⁴⁹

It is worth mentioning the Black Sea highway, construction of which began in 2011 is still under construction. It is one of the most important projects that has derived from the BSEC meetings. The length of the highway is estimated to be around 7140 km, including the countries of Turkey, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria. At the same time, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Albania and Serbia also will be connected to this highway through other additional routes.²⁵⁰

Agim Pasholli, Director of Multilateral Initiatives from Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Albania stress that BSEC was among first organizations which marks the beginning of the commitment of Albanian institutions, not only by being present at certain forums, but also being active in many debates taking place within BSEC.²⁵¹ Pasholli says that:

²⁴⁹ Deniz Memedi, “Çka Mund të fitojë Maqedonia Nëse Anëtarësohet në Organizatën për Bashkëpunimin Ekonomik të Detit të Zi”, **Respublica**, 10.04.2019, <https://respublica.edu.mk/mk/blog/cka-mund-te-fitoje-maqedonia-mese-anetaresohet-ne-organizaten-per-bashkepunitimin-ekonomik-te-malit-te-zi>, [20.01.2021].

²⁵⁰ **Ibid.**

²⁵¹ Agim Pasholli, “Albania and BSEC Regional Cooperation, European Integration and BSEC”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/albania-and-bsec-regional-cooperation_-european-integration-and-bsec-.tr.mfa, [20.03.2018].

“Nowadays, everybody agrees that important progress of regional cooperation within the framework of BSEC is achieved. We are glad that the organization is trying now to define the frame for a continuous dialogue and cooperative action between BSEC and the EU. This action/cooperation needs to be mutually beneficial and result-oriented. We are confident that our cooperation which we are trying to strengthen in the form of sub-regional or regional cooperation is a stepping stone towards integration in general and a sine qua non condition for the integration into EU, in particular.”²⁵²

Lastly Pasholli states that the specific role of BSEC is that of being a full-fledged regional economic organization”.²⁵³

Whereas the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Greece to the Republic of Turkey Mr. George Yennimatas state that:

“Despite the heterogeneity of its members-states, BSEC has managed to develop a spirit of cooperation, providing a forum for constant dialogue and constructive exchange of fertile ideas and concrete proposals, among countries that do not always share similar points of view. As a full – fledged international organization since 1999, BSEC addresses the need to promote regional cooperation throughout the “wider Black Sea area” which means all the territories of the Black Sea littoral states, the Balkans and the Caucasus, which, throughout history, used the Black Sea as an important link for commercial and cultural exchanges. At the same time, BSEC as an international organization, contributed significantly over the last fifteen years to developing and strengthening good neighborly relations, integration, peace, stability and security in this Black Sea geo-strategic corridor”.²⁵⁴

Also the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia to the Republic of Turkey Mr. Vladimir Curgus evaluates the view of his country towards BSEC stating that:

“Serbia intends to make additional efforts to establish closer contacts between BSEC and other international organizations and to strengthen their cooperation. It is particularly important that this cooperation be based on the respect of the generally accepted principles of international law and every precedent in the implementation of those principles would diminish the scope and impact of multilateral cooperation.”²⁵⁵

Considering the assessments of BSEC member countries coming from the Balkans, it can be noticed how successful was the idea that Turkey promoted at that time. Without going into the elaboration of the achievements and failures of BSEC since to date, in the

²⁵² **Ibid.**

²⁵³ **Ibid.**

²⁵⁴ George Yennimatas, “Greece’s View of the Organization of The Black Sea Economic Cooperation”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/greece_s-view-of-the-organization-of-the-black-sea-economic-cooperation-.tr.mfa, [20.03.2018].

²⁵⁵ Vladimir Curgus, “Serbian Views on the Future of The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/serbian-views-on-the-future-of-the-black-sea-economic-cooperation-organization-.tr.mfa>, [20.03.2018].

part that has to do with the vision and project realization, BSEC as an idea has given indisputable weight to Turkey in the international context.

2.2 From the Dayton Agreement to the Kosovo Intervention as a New Challenge for Turkish Foreign Policy (1995-2002)

The last decade of the XX century in the Balkans will be marked as the darkest period of the recent history of Europe. The non-response of international community to stop the war in Bosnia and to avoid the humanitarian catastrophe are moments that history books will continue to write for the tragedy that happened in the heart of Europe. The beginning of 1990's in the Balkans were characterized by civil wars, genocide, abandonment of homes and loss of lives of many innocent people. All of this, stopped partially with the Dayton Agreement, following the overrule intervention of the international community in Bosnia. Perhaps the agreement that was drafted at that time was not ideal for this country,²⁵⁶ but was the only formula of the time to prevent another genocide by the Milošević regime.

Turkey as a country which made effort at international platforms to stop the war, welcomed the Dayton Accords. Even though it was not a direct actor who participated in the preparation of this agreement, Turkey's contribution in reaching the agreement was indisputable. In the post Dayton Agreement, Turkey's foreign policy was characterized by a slower activism in the Balkans. It can be said that several factors influenced this less activism:

- The end of Bosnian war and opening of new chapter between communities living in Bosnia;
- Change of the governments in the Balkan countries;
- Introduction of a new policy of Greece towards its neighbors particularly Albania and Macedonia.

²⁵⁶ After signing of Dayton Peace Accord Alija Izetbegovic declared "This is maybe not fair justice, but it is more proper this kind of justice rather than continuation of the war. In the situation in which we are, and in the world in which we live actually, better peace could not be achieved. God is our witness that we have done everything possible to minimize injustice for our country and people. "Podsjećanje na Parafiranje Dejtonskog Sporazuma", **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 20.10.2010, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/tema_sedmice_dejtonski_sporazum/2225533.html, [17.05.2018].

Apart from these factors it should be mentioned that the agenda of the Balkan countries was focused on the Euro-Integration process. That is to say, the focus and energy of Central and Western Balkan countries have been concentrated in the integration in these structures for the reason of benefits that can enjoy by being part of the EU family. Also this new situation prevented Turkey from continuing its active approach in the Balkans.²⁵⁷

But soon the "turbulences" in the Balkans started again. This time the region was faced with another conflict, that of Kosovo. Turkey again began to re-activate her activism in the Balkans perhaps not as much as it did in BiH, but her "voice" was still important in the attempt for preventing a new humanitarian catastrophe. Turkey's efforts were focused in neutralization of this conflict without having consequences in neighboring states that could create serious repercussions especially in the economic plan. The second part of the first chapter will focus on Turkey's post-war activism in BiH, Turkish military presence in the Alba Operation after the internal anarchy triggered in Albania, Turkey's diplomacy in the war of Kosovo, and Turkey's approach in the Macedonian conflict.

2.2.1. Turkish Foreign Policy after Dayton Agreement

After the Dayton Agreement the intensity of Turkey's active approach over the Balkans started to slow down. In this phase the engagement of Turkey together with other actors of the international community was focused on carrying out the Dayton Peace Accord. After reaching of Dayton Agreement in October 1995, two months later more exactly on December 8-9, 1995, an international peace conference was held in London. The participants of the conference decided to establish Peace Implementation Council - PIC aiming to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement. PIC consisted by 55 states contributing to the peace process in various ways such as humanitarian, material, military etc. In addition to this, a Steering Board was set up, consisting by

²⁵⁷ Mustafa Türkeş, "Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: Quest for Enduring Stability and Security", **Turkish Foreign Policy in Post Cold War Era**, ed. Idris Bal (Florida:Brown Walker Press, 2004): 198.

representatives from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, America, representatives by EU and Turkey as a representative of ICO.²⁵⁸

In this context, IFOR which was a NATO-led multinational peace force with one year mandate (1995-1996) was responsible to implement the military Annexes of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Within IFOR participated Turkish brigade consisted by a large Turkish mechanized infantry battalion with a tank company and artillery battery stationed in Zenica.²⁵⁹

IFOR completed its duty on December 20, 1996, leaving its position to SFOR (NATO Stabilization Force). Turkish brigade was also part of it. The Turkish Battalion Task Force (TBTF) in Bosnia was under operational control of the USA division. It must be emphasized that the number of military personnel in the Turkish brigade in SFOR decreased from 1,333 to 833 persons. The most important tasks of the Turkish unit were to provide humanitarian help to refugees and displaced people who live in refugee camps; helping in restoration of the country infrastructure; helping people with health needs; supporting Bosnian youth in education, facilitation of democratic processes and enhancing the rule of law.²⁶⁰

On December 2, 2004 SFOR mission was replaced by EU military mission in Bosnia called EUFOR. EUFOR was considered to be the biggest and most significant realization of the Common European Foreign and Security Policy. EUFOR was supposed to have the same number of troops as SFOR, around 7,000. Around 80 % of the troops who were in SFOR remained in the mission of EUFOR.²⁶¹ The Turkish Armed Forces under the leadership of the EU continued to make contributions to the ALTHEA operation with a total staff of 255 people. Apart of this, Turkey also has contributed to civilian police activities as an important element of peacekeeping process.

²⁵⁸ Pınar Yürür, “Uluslararası Toplumun Bosna-Hersek’i Yeniden Yapılandırma Süreci ve Modeli”, (PhD thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2007), 110.

²⁵⁹ Robert F. Baumann, George W. Gawrych, Walter E. Kretchik, **Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia**, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 121.

²⁶⁰ Abu Deyam, “Turkish Battalion Task Force in 1992-1995 Bosnia War”, https://www.academia.edu/20062082/TURKISH_BATTALION_TASK_FORCE_IN_1992-1995_BOSNIA_WAR [11.05.2018].

²⁶¹ Nick Hawton, “EU Troops Prepare for Bosnia Swap”, **BBC News**, 23.10.2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3944191.stm>, [11.05.2018].

In order to establish a social order Turkey also participated in UNIPTF (UN International Police Task Force) with a staff of 100 people. In January 2003 UNIPTF was replaced with EUP (EU Police Mission). Turkey here contributed with a staff of 31 people. Even today there are around 8 Turkish members in this mission.²⁶²

In the context of military recovery assistance it is worth mentioning the "Train and Equip" program, which is considered to be a USA project in cooperation with Turkey. USA preferred to implement this program indirectly by creating a private Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), a company run by retired USA officers by whom according to some claims all this "operation" was conducted through the mediation of Turkey. USA was responsible more about the supplying of arms, whereas Turkey for the education of the military personnel. In this direction, from May 29, 1996 until mid-1998 in Etimesgut district of Ankara, a military staff of 150 to 200 people were trained every academic semester. In some of the semesters there were Bosnian officers in the others Croats.²⁶³

Even though Turkey's support for Bosnia was in providing training for the military personnel, political circles of Greece claimed that Turkey also had supplied Bosnia with weapons. According to them, in July 1996, an airplane from Istanbul had send light weapons to Bosnia. While few months later more exactly in November in co-operation with Malaysia, Turkey has sent heavy weapons to this country.²⁶⁴

After Dayton Agreement Turkey's activism towards Bosnia wasn't the same comparing the period of the conflict. But the frequency of the visits in the level of head of states was still "alive". For example, in the summer of 1997 Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović paid a visit Ankara aiming to discuss several topics regarding the bilateral relations between Bosnia and Turkey. Among others Izetbegović reminded Turkish leadership about the \$80 million credit which was supposed to be given by Eximbank according to the agreement signed one year before between PM Necmettin Erbakan and

²⁶² Sibel Akgün, "Dayton Anlaşması Sonrası Türk Dış Politikasında Süreklilik ve İstikrar: Bosna Hersek", **Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüt Merkezi**, Vol. 9, No. 16 (2011): 134-135.

²⁶³ İlhan Uzgel, "Doksanlarda Türkiye İçin Bir İşbirliği ve Rekabet Alanı Olarak Balkanlar", **En Uzun Onyıl Türkiye'nin Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dış Politika Gündeminde Doksanlı Yıllar**, ed. Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut (İstanbul:Boyut Kitapları, 1998): 412.

²⁶⁴ **Ibid**, 412.

his counterpart Hasan Muratović. Turkish government decided that \$20 million of the credit would be given as a grant. But, from the grant that was promised only \$2,2 million was given after one year. Izetbegović also raised symbolic but very important issue in perspective of the Ottoman history, the restoration of the Mostar Bridge. That's why together in the meeting with Izetbegović was the mayor of Mostar, in order to have meeting with President Demirel and to talk about this topic. The next visit was realized in January 1998 by Turkish leadership in BiH. In this meeting Hikmet Çetin (Speaker of the Turkish Parliament) outlined Turkey's policy towards Bosnia in the post-1995 period. He stated that, "Turkey will continue to support the implementation of the Dayton Agreement in both civil and military terms."²⁶⁵ In the meeting was discussed also the issue of re-socialization process for the Bosnian refugee that will return back to their homes. Çetin emphasized that international community must contribute in helping these people. Hikmet Çetin together with Ismail Cem visited BiH again in mid-April of the same year. During this visit Ismail Cem declared that Turkey's aim was to have equal access of relation with all ethnic groups living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁶⁶

During 1999 Turkey's President Süleyman Demirel paid a visit Bosnia visiting a Turkish task force in Zenica. Demirel addressed to the soldiers with the words "Do not let Bosnian problem in the air". In this meeting Demirel also commented the late reaction by the international community letting the internal war in BiH to run and watching the terrible consequences only as a spectator. Among other things, Demirel stated that:

"I don't even want to remember that period, but when I remember I feel disappointment. This shouldn't happen in the 20th century in Europe and above all the international community shouldn't take the position of spectator in these tragedies".²⁶⁷

Demirel also expressed gratitude to the Turkish troops for doing their duty in such a way. "Turkish Armed Forces are the pride of Turkey. All Turkey is proud of you for representing us in such a good way" said Demirel. Demirel also visited Turkish Task Force Hospital, the Turkish Fountain and the Zenica Turkish park.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 112-113.

²⁶⁶ **Ibid.**

²⁶⁷ "Demirel: Asker Bosna gururum", **Hürriyet**, 08.12.1999, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/demirel-asker-bosna-gururum-39117798>, [15.05.2018].

²⁶⁸ **Ibid.**

The relations between Turkey and BiH were not characterised only with positive developments. A stagnation of relations emerged after Bosnia's decision to open her embassy in South Cyprus which disappointed Turkish public opinion. Additionally, the culmination of negative developments during this period erupted with the decision by BiH to impose a visa obligation towards Turkish citizens. This decision came from BiH Ministry of Human Rights. According to this ministry, "Many Turks had illegally passed through Bosnia to go to other countries in Europe".²⁶⁹ The statistical data of this institution showed that only in a period of few months nearly 6000 Turks, and additionally citizens of Bulgaria and Iran have used the Bosnian route to move in Europe. For this reason it will be required the implementation of visa regime for these countries. After this development came the reaction by Turkey's Ambassador to Bosnia Ahmet Erozan, pointing out that this decision will bring repercussions to Bosnian citizens who are limited to travel abroad as the result of visa regime. In this case Turkey also will reply with the same measure with imposing the visa regime to the Bosnian citizens. Additionally, the outbreak of the Kosovo war also prompted both local actors and the international community, including Turkey, to focus on resolving the next Balkan conflict, protagonist of which was again Serbia led by Milošević.²⁷⁰

2.2.2. The Pyramid Crises in Albania and Turkey's Contribution to Overcoming the Crisis

After the conflict in Bosnia it seemed that in the Balkans would start a process of recovering and everything would go in the right way. But this hope did not last long. The upcoming crisis that made this region again the center of world attention was the internal anarchy in Albania as a result of the pyramid economic schemes that caused fatal consequences. The 1997 rebellion, also known as the "Pyramid crisis"²⁷¹, began on

²⁶⁹ "Bosna Türkiye'ye Vize Koyuyor", **Hürriyet**, 22.10.2000, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/bosna-turkiyeye-vize-koyuyor-39191656>, [16.05. 2018].

²⁷⁰ **Ibid.**

²⁷¹ Anti-Corruption Governance Center define the the pyramid schemes as a "business format intended to attract members through a promise of attractive payments or services for enrolling others into the scheme, instead of supplying investments or sale of products. When recruiting multiplies, recruiting becomes quickly impossible, and most members of the group are unable to profit; as such, pyramid schemes are unsustainable and often illegal". In the Albania, at the end of 1996, a series of "Pyramid" schemes held money equal to almost half of the Albania's total GDP. The "Pyramid" schemes were sustained by a companies that were founded after 1990. A lot of Albanians rushed to do investment in the schemes, to

24 January in Lushnje as an anti-government move. The cause of rebellion was the bankruptcy of the pyramid schemes which took around \$ 1.2 billion savings of Albanian citizens.²⁷² Good number of Albanian citizens sold their homes and invested the proceeds into this schemes.²⁷³ The crisis went out of control and state authorities did not have the management over the state. Thousands of citizens stood up in demonstrations in all over Albania requesting the compensation of their money taken by the bankers.²⁷⁴ In a very short period Albania was faced with the collapse of state system once again, as happened during the transition of political system at the beginning of 1990's. During the demonstrations and uprisings 2.000 Albanian citizens lost their lives.²⁷⁵ In order to save their own lives a lot of Albanians started to leave the country escaping with refugee status in the neighboring countries like Greece and Italy. Countries around Albania started to worry about the situation in case that chaos would be prolonged more. President of Albania Sali Berisha being aware that efforts had not been successful to stop the anarchy despite the establishing of the Government of National Conciliation, finally he decided to call for external help to end the chaos.²⁷⁶

On March 28, 1997, UN Security Council adopted the resolution no. 1101 which foresaw the creation of a multinational security force that would provide the conditions for humanitarian aid. The resolution was submitted by Italy which also will head the multinational peacekeeping force called "Operation Alba". The aim of the mission was

whom it was promised that will triple their money in a very short period of time. It was the Albanian government that promoted the schemes on the national television. According to the words of an observer, "Albania looked like a slaughterhouse because all the farmers were selling their livestock to invest in the "Pyramid" schemes. It seemed as if everybody could get rich quick". But, the collapse was foreseeable that will happen soon. Thus, "on November 19th, 1996, the first scheme collapsed when they were no able to bring enough deposits to pay previous depositors. For around four months, all the major schemes collapsed as well". For more see: "Albanian Ponzi Schemes as an Extreme Case for Strong Corporate Governance", **Anti-Corruption & Governance Center**, 30.01.2018, <https://acgc.cipe.org/business-of-integrity-blog/albanian-ponzi-schemes-as-an-extreme-case-for-strong-corporategovernance/#:~:text=At%20their%20height%20in%20November,monthly%20interest%20rates%20on%20deposits.,> [04.08.2018].

²⁷² Përparim Kabo, "1997...pas 20 Vjetësh Çfarë mund të Shohim Ndryshe...?!", **Gazeta Shqiptare**, 20.08.2017, <http://www.gsh.al/2017/08/20/1997pas-20-vjetesh-çfare-mund-te-shohim-ndryshe/>, [05.08.2018].

²⁷³ Lee Hockstader, "Albanian Dreams Shatter in Pyramid Schemes Fall", **Washington Post**, 02.02.1997, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/02/02/albanian-dreams-shatter-in-pyramid-schemes-fall/d32cf2c6-dd8c-4c52-b61c-50582135a603/>, [06.08.2018].

²⁷⁴ Ekinci, "Turkey and the Balkans in the Post Cold War Era", 157.

²⁷⁵ Sülkü, "Political Relations Between Turkey and Albania", 39.

²⁷⁶ ~~Andriy~~ **Andriy**, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey", 109.

to establish order and peace in the country. It was decided that the troops should stay three months in Albania and the costs would be paid by the participating countries. The countries that participate in the mission have to report every two weeks to the Security Council regarding the situation in Albania. Taking into consideration that soon were coming the early elections but on the other hand the violence still was present in the country, with the resolution no. 1114. (June 19,1997) was decided to be extended the mission of international forces in Albania for 45 days more. The international forces were authorized to secure the freedom of movement and to protect OSCE observers. On August 11, 1997, international forces left the country.²⁷⁷

Since the beginning of the crisis, Turkey as a friendly country of Albania, carefully followed the circumstances and expressed concern about the situation that went out of control. Among the first statements (March 17, 1997) by the Turkish leadership came from the Prime Minister Tansu Çiller stating that:

“Turkey will not remain silent on efforts from others to tear Albania apart. In order to preserve the territorial integrity of Albania and to resolve the crisis as soon as possible, the Turkish government has intensified her activity in NATO, OSCE and other international organizations. Turkey is ready to take her place in any international force or in any project that will be drafted for this purpose. The mistake made in Bosnia should not be repeated in Albania. In this context, Turkey will give to Albania all the necessary aid, both in the political and economic plan, as well as in the military one.”²⁷⁸

The biggest concern of Turkey regarding the crisis in Albania was the eventual fragmentation of the territory and the claims of Greece around Northern Epirus. This was also evident in the successive statements of Turkish leadership that insisted that they would not allow fragmentation of Albanian territories.

Twelve days after the first declaration regarding the crises in Albania, Turkish Prime Minister Çiller addressed to the world media decisively saying that:

“Turkey is determined to preserve the territorial integrity of Albania and cannot stay passive to events that threaten the fragmentation of Albania. The deterioration of situation in Albania is unacceptable and would be a shame for Europe, so Turkey is ready to do everything to stabilize the situation in Albania.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ “1997, kur Anarkinë e Shuan Shumëkombëshet”, **Zeri i Kosoves**, 06.08.2011, <https://zerikosoves.com/1997-kur-anarkine-e-shuan-shumekombeshet/>, [10.08.2018].

²⁷⁸ Hajro Limaj, **Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës**, 107.

While, in an interview for the daily newspaper "Shekulli", Colonel Hajro Limaj, former Albanian military attaché in Ankara emphasized that:

“The particularity of the crisis situation of that time was that every single day we were faced with unacceptable things and apart from Turkey no member state of NATO or EU didn't react so openly to defend Albania's sovereignty and integrity. With the deployment of international troops through ALBA operation, Turkey brought 900 soldiers. Turkish troops were very active in establishing order and security, in order for the state be ready in preparing the early general elections.”²⁸⁰

In addition to statements in support for Albania, Turkey also contributed in practice. As was stated above, under the "Alba" operation, Turkey took part with 900 soldiers. Their command was in Zall-Herr. The mission of Turkish soldiers was focused on the protection of the airport of Rinas, the western area of Tirana and the road axis up to Burrel. On May 9, 1997, the General staff of the Turkish Armed Forces İsmail Hakkı Karadayı paid a visit to Albania in order to check the status of the Turkish military mission and conduct bilateral meetings with the Albanian leadership. Karadayı held meetings with President Sali Berisha, Prime Minister of a National Unity Bashkim Fino and the Chief of General Staff of army Adem Çopani.²⁸¹

On the eve of the early parliamentary elections in Albania, on May 17, 1997, now in the capacity of Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Çiller, stated that no one should interfere in the internal affairs of Albania. Furthermore, Çiller conveyed the message that weapons taken from depots for various reasons should be immediately handed over to the competent official authorities. She also reminded that Turkey in the framework of the peacekeeping mission “Alba” has her military troops to help Albania during the recovery process.²⁸²

The frequency of mutual visits was a testimony that Turkey was determined to help Albania in returning to normality of state institutions. Albania also had full confidence in Turkish leadership in terms of their sincere intentions.

Thus, the next meeting was held on June 10-12, 1997 in Turkey. Albanian delegation consisted by the Prime Minister of National Reconciliation Bashkim Fino, Foreign

²⁸⁰ Leonard Veizi, “Turqia Bllokoi Planin Grek për Kufirin në Vjosë”, **Shekulli**, <http://shekulli.com.al/12135/>, [15.08.2018].

²⁸¹ Limaj, **Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës**, 119-121.

²⁸² **Ibid**, 109.

Affairs Minister Arian Starova, Agriculture Minister Haxhi Aliko and other members of the government. Albanian Prime Minister met with President of Turkey Süleyman Demirel, Prime Minister Necmeddin Erbakan and Foreign Affairs Minister Tansu Çiller. During this meeting Turkish side gave guarantee for full support to the Albanian delegation. Meanwhile Tansu Çiller in front of the media once again repeated that “Turkey will not allow anyone to affect the sovereignty and integrity of Albania.”²⁸³

The Socialist Party gained the parliamentary elections on June 29, 1997 and Fatos Nano was appointed Prime Minister of Albania. After the establishment of the new government, among the first foreign delegations that came in Albania was the visit of Turkey's Minister of Defense Ismet Sezgin. Minister Sezgin stayed in Albania for 3 days (between September 10-13, 1997) with the aim to establish communication with the new government and maintaining the good relations between the two states. During his meeting with Prime Minister Nano, Sezgin stated that, “Turkey is available to help Albania in overcoming the crisis after 1996-97 incidents”. In this regard Fatos Nano replied saying that:

“I know your determination. After we moved to the democracy I was the first prime minister. We were in great difficulty in providing bread because the reserves that country had were running out. We made efforts and requests in many countries but when I contacted your Prime Minister Turgut Özal, he immediately responded positively and ordered to send three big ships with wheat at the port of Durrës.”²⁸⁴

It is important to mention that Fatos Nano has been the only Albanian prime minister who has not made an official visit to Turkey. In general he was known as a politician who had the most pro-Greek orientation and distanced himself from an intense relationship with Turkey. Also Greek preferences regarding Albanian leadership were pro Fatos Nano, because according to them due to having Orthodox background over Sali Berisha as a Muslim, Nano was seen as being friendlier to Greek interests. A proof of this could be the temporary suspension of membership of Albania in 1998 in the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) during Nano's governance, which considered it as an obstacle to Albania's European aspirations.

²⁸³ **Ibid**, 124-125.

²⁸⁴ **Ibid**, 132.

During this period one of the most fruitful meetings between two states can be considered the visit of Minister of Defense of Albania Dr. Sabit Brokaj in Ankara on December 22-26, 1997. During this visit, 12 protocols were signed between Turkey and Albania, and particular emphasis was put on the re-establishment of the Albanian army. Regarding the army repair, Minister Brokaj highlighted the official demand of reconstruction of the Maritime Naval Base of Pashalimani and the Academy of Naval Forces in Vlora, which are strategically important. The Turkish side expressed interest in this request and in all details presented by the Minister of Defense. After his official visit to Turkey, Minister Brokaj held a press conference in which presented the possibility of Turkey's strategic investments for the reconstruction of Pashalimani, the repair of military vessels and the reconstruction of the Academy Naval Forces of Albania. Later on all this things were realized by Turkish side.²⁸⁵

With the construction of the final phase (the year of 2001) of the naval base Pashalimani, it was organized a ceremonial opening with the presence of the commander of Turkish Naval Forces, Admiral İlham Erdil. Admiral Erdil from Tirana to Vlora went together with President Rexhep Mejdani. In his speech President Mejdani stressed that it is a great honor and pride to see the Pashalimani facilities which has come to NATO standards. President Mejdani expressed gratitude toward Turkish authorities on behalf of the Albanian people. Navy Commander Admiral Erdil stated that Turkey spent \$ 16 million in the investment of Naval Academy, Pashalimani and the activation of the shipyard. Additionally Admiral Erdil said the ongoing projects will be at the desired level in 2004. It should be emphasized that Pashalimani Military Base is the only military base of Turkey abroad. It is consisted of 4 officers, 5 junior officers, 1 expert Sergeant and 14 soldiers. This staff, 24 hours a day are ready in their tasks.²⁸⁶

During this period of consolidation of the Albanian state, 10,850 uniforms and equipment were provided for the Albanian armed forces. Apart of this, Turkish troops contributed to the restoration of Albania by repairing roads, fecal sewerage and

²⁸⁵ **Ibid**, 148-158.

²⁸⁶ “Adriyatik’teki Türk üssü”, **Milliyet**, 17.04.2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/adriyatik-teki-turk-ussu-gundem-2228426/>, [02.09.2018].

restoration of some schools. Additionally, was provided medical equipment for the Albanian soldiers.²⁸⁷

Apart from the support by Turkish state toward Albania to overcome the economic and political crises, Turkey also opened the doors to the Albanian people during 1997 and 1998 where around 6500 families in total 42,000 people arrived in Turkey. This wave of migration towards Turkey was for the purpose of providing safety and normal living conditions of these families. It is worth noting that these people chose Turkey also because there wasn't a need for a visa for Albanian citizens to travel in Turkey.²⁸⁸

According to Colonel Hajro Limaj, the assistance and support of the Turkish state to Albania from the period 1992 to the end of 2000 was over 60 million dollars, half of which was destined in material assistance and various military equipment. In addition to this, within this period, about 1000 students and senior military personnel were educated and qualified. This number in July 2012 went to 1647 people, of which 995 were educated and qualified in the educational institutions of the land forces, 319 in the educational institutions of the naval forces, 86 in the educational institutions of the air force, 95 in the educational institutions of medicine within the academy of military medicine, 12 in the educational institutions of electronic systems and 18 in the educational institutions of the coastal defense. This staff from the first day of their education until graduation had everything for free, which means accommodation, food, health insurance, training, etc. All this was covered by Turkish state.²⁸⁹

In addition, from 1993 to the end of 2000, 400 soldiers or members of the military families of the Albanian Armed Forces were treated free of charge at the "GATA" Army Central Hospital in Ankara. This figure at the end of July 2012 reached 907 people. The costs of these treatments are not symbolic, ie. it is about serious treatments. For

²⁸⁷ Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun, "Arnavutluk'un Dış Politikası ve Balkanlar'da Arnavut Sorunu", **Balkan Diplomasisi**, ed. Ömer E. Lütem, Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun (Ankara: Asam Yayınları, 2001): 88.

²⁸⁸ Ahmet İçduygu, Deniz Sert, "The Changing Waves of Migration from the Balkans to Turkey: A Historical Account", ed. Hans Vermeulen, Martin Baldwin-Edwards, Riki van Boeschoten, **Migration in the Southern Balkans, From Ottoman Territory to Globalized Nation States**, (IMISCOE Research Series, 2015): 100.

²⁸⁹ Limaj, **Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës**, 40-41.

example, about 100 people have undergone difficult heart surgeries, others have been treated in longer periods in departments such as orthopedics, oncology, etc.²⁹⁰

The above data show that Turkey has been one of the important states that provided assistance and support in overcoming the crisis in Albania during 1997. Intensive visits in relation Ankara-Tirana, participation of Turkish troops in UN multinational peacekeeping force Alba, rebuilding military strategic points, repairing military artillery, educating new Albanian militaries in Turkey, healing Albanian soldiers in the Turkish military hospitals, are just part of the Turkish support toward Albania, which is considered its strategic partner in the Balkans. This support continued in the future, regardless of the change of political constellations in both countries.

2.2.3. Turkish Foreign Policy in the Kosovo War

2.2.3.1 The Origin of the Problem of Kosovo within Yugoslavia

The Dayton Agreement which was reached at the Wright-Patterson airfield in Dayton (21 November 1995) put the end of the three year conflict between Serbs, Bosnians and Croats. But it seemed that the document that provide peace in Bosnia, soon after generated the next conflict in Kosovo. The Dayton Agreement did not take into consideration the Kosovo case, although Milošević was representative in the process of reaching the accord in BiH. According to Richard Caplan, there are three most important reasons that marginalized Kosovo Albanians from the process of Dayton. First, based on the circumstances of that time, the international western community, was of the opinion that there is still much to negotiate with Slobodan Milošević, while there was a dispute over the issues of collaboration and surrender of war criminals requested by the International Criminal Tribunal of Hague. Second, no one did not "dare" to minimize the "efforts" of Milošević from being a "peacemaker", as he had mediated with the Bosnian Serbs to accept the compromise of peace. His collaboration was determinant for the

²⁹⁰ **Ibid**, 42.

implementation of the Dayton Accords. Thirdly, in the territory Kosovo there was still no war, so there was no necessity to discuss regarding this topic.²⁹¹

In fact, the roots of the Kosovo problem date back since Yugoslavia that was led by its emblematic leader Tito. During October and November 1968, in many cities of Kosovo were organized massive demonstrations in which the entire Albanian population was out in the streets. Their main requirement was the recognition of the Republic's status for Kosovo and the right of Albanians for self-determination. In these demonstrations, all social strata participated, saying unanimously that Albanians in Yugoslavia wanted to enjoy all the rights equally like other nations within the federation. Albanians were referring to the right of use of national symbols, the right of the nation and not of nationality, the right of self-determination and the right of their state - the Republic of Kosovo within the Federation of Yugoslavia.²⁹² Yugoslavian leadership responded to the demands of Albanians advancing their rights with improving academic and infrastructural conditions of the University of Prishtina which most students are Albanian, increasing the number of books in Albanian language, allowing the display of the Albanian national flag as a Kosovar emblem, creating more space for new investments in order to close the development gap and in constitution of 1974 granting Kosovo with practically full self-administration.²⁹³

One of the decisive moments of the Kosovo's history was the 1981 demonstrations. It started with protest by the students of the University of Pristina on March 4, 1981, for improvement of the conditions in the student's canteens, which was pressed violently by the police. This event caused the mass demonstration on March 11, 1981 which also was pressed by state institutions and were arrested some students. With that began the overall demonstrations in Kosovo. Then followed with the "Protests of Workers", where workers sought the release to the imprisoned students. During these gatherings, the Yugoslav army was also present there. After two months in the territory of Kosovo was

²⁹¹ Enika Abazi, "Çështja e Kosovës dhe Diplomacia Ndërkombëtare (1991-1999): Një Konflikt i Parashikueshëm", **Studime Historike**, Vol. 66, Issue 3-4 (2011): 201-202.

²⁹² Naim Musliu, "Demonstratat e Nëntorit të vitit 1968 në Kosovë", **IIOnline**, 17.01.2018, <https://2lonline.com/demonstrata-e-nentorit-te-vitit-1968-ne-kosove/>, [15.10.2018].

²⁹³ Nation, **War in the Balkans: 1991-2002**, 224.

declared "the state of emergency".²⁹⁴ In sum, It started with a small protest and escalated in riots involving twenty thousand protesters in the cities of Kosovo. In these riots, nine people lost their lives and more than fifty were injured.²⁹⁵

Activities manifested with protests against the Yugoslav federation by Kosovar Albanians did not cease. In the wake of the pro-independence demonstrations of January and February 1989, the Government of Belgrade responded by declaring the "state of emergency" on February 27, sending troops to press the protests of the miners and the students who were on strike. From then the events were going to precipitate, since the 23 of March 1989 when the Belgrade Government revoked the status of autonomy of Kosovo. The decision for revoking the status of autonomy was approved by Serbian Parliament after receiving green light in referendum for constitutional changes regarding the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. On 8 August of the same year, Serbian forces closed the daily newspaper "Rilindja" in Albanian language, and in the following months the Serbian authorities were going to adopt a series of repressive measures, such as the dissolution of the Kosovar Parliament, the ban of the teaching of the Albanian language and the adoption of an authentic martial law in which to the Belgrade forces granted full powers.²⁹⁶

Successive decisions of minimizing the rights of Albanians in Kosovo obliged the Kosovo intellectual class to have a more systematic and organized resistance to the injustices that Milošević did at that time. That's why was created Democratic League of Kosovo (1989) led by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova and followed from intellectuals like Bujar Bukoshi, Fehmi Agani and Rexhep Qosja. The clear objective was forwarding the national independence. In the summer of 1990 (July 2), the Kosovo Assembly declared the province to be "an independent and equal entity of Yugoslav federation". This

²⁹⁴ "36 Vjet nga Demonstratat e vitit 1981", **Telegrafi**, 11.03.2017, <https://telegrafi.com/36-vjet-nga-demonstratat-e-vitit-1981/>, [16.10.2018]

²⁹⁵ David Binder, "One Storm has Passed but others are Gathering in Yugoslavia", **New York Times**, 19.04.198., <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/19/weekinreview/one-storm-has-passed-but-others-are-gathering-in-yugoslavia.html>, [16.10.2018].

²⁹⁶ Juan Jose Otinano Vines, Romulado Bermejo Garcia, **Los Conflictos de los Balcanes**, (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales y Europeos "Francisco de Vitoria," Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Escuela de Guerra del Ejercito y Secretaria General Tecnica, Ministeriode Defensa, 2007), 318.

decision expressly was dissolved and qualified as illegal by the Federal Presidency of Yugoslavia. Three days later on July 5, the group reconvened underground as the “Assembly of Kosova”.²⁹⁷ One year later, on September 21, 1991 was the date when the Kosovar leadership proclaimed the former province as independent Republic of Kosovo which was confirmed by referendum in which ninety percent of Albanians voted. This act gave moral and motivation to the shadow government of Ibrahim Rugova. Rugovian politics resembled to the Gandhian type of policy, which stimulated parallel life and created an Albanian society with separate institutions from the Yugoslav federation. This political approach aimed to minimize violent conflicts with the regime of Milošević and gain support from the international community for the recognition of Kosovo’s independence.²⁹⁸

Three dimensions have characterized Rugova's politics since the establishment of the DLK. The first is to minimize violent revolt against the Milošević regime; the second is the recognition of the problem by the international community which Kosovo Albanians are faced with. The second dimension aimed the interference of the international politics that mean finding a diplomatic solution to the issue until the establishment of the protectorate by the United Nations over Kosovo. And the third is systematic denial of the legitimacy of the Serbian government boycotting elections and registration of population, by establishing their parallel system within Kosovo. In fact, if we analyze the three segments we will see that all have been implemented and at a certain time have had their success until the ultimate goal of Kosovo Albanians, which was the declaration of independence in 2008.²⁹⁹

The social and political parallel activities of Kosovo leadership continued, so in 1992, unilaterally were organized the parliamentary and presidential elections, where Dr. Ibrahim Rugova was elected as president of Kosovo. With these elections, Rugova became the undisputed leader of Kosovo Albanians. After that, Rugova managed to create the Kosovo government in exile by creating parallel structures in Kosovo, ranging

²⁹⁷ Nation, **War in the Balkans: 1991-2002**, 225.

²⁹⁸ Enika Abazi, “Kosovo: War, Peace and Intervention in a Nutshell”, **Turkish Review of Balkan Studies**, Annual 6 (2001): 59.

²⁹⁹ Noel Malcolm, **Kosova: Një Histori e Shkurtër**, trs. Abdullah Karjagdiu (Prishtinë: Koha, 2011), 435.

from administration, education to health. During this time, Rugova tried to make some co-operation with Slobodan Milošević, initially for unlocking school buildings, but without success.³⁰⁰

Rugovian pacifist approach motivated by Gandian method of resistance, resulted to not be successful in achieving the main goal which was independence from Serbia. That's why, a good part of Kosovar Albanians thought that only through coercive resistance could succeed in winning international recognition. This part of people felt fatigue in the endless discussions of "preventive diplomacy" and "early mechanisms" which did not solve anything regarding the status of the country. This approach was the psychological base for the establishment of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). In another part, the open activism of KLA in Kosovo was great excuse for brutally unlawful actions taken by Milošević. Milošević goal was to provoke Albanians from Kosovo to go in war and justify the ethnic cleansing. Actually that happened in the massacre of Drenica at the beginning of March 1998 were the whole family of Adem Jashari among them 25 women and children were killed. This was the momentum with which started the seven months of open war.³⁰¹

2.2.3.2. The Approach of the International Community Towards the War in Kosovo

The Drenica massacre overthrow the thesis that the conflict in Kosovo is an internal issue of Serbia and no one has the right to interfere within its sovereignty. Based on the form of execution and the number of victims in the Jashari family, the situation in Kosovo was internationalized. The first signals of internationalization of the Kosovo issue came with the decision by the International Tribunal for War Crimes in Hague to collect evidence on the Drenica affair.³⁰² Immediately after that, on March 9, 1998, the Contact Group (United Kingdom, USA, Russia, Italy and France) organized a meeting to discuss the issue of Kosovo. During the meeting, the USA was for more stringent measures

³⁰⁰ Muharrem Nitaj, "Ibrahim Rugova - Një Jetë e Tërë", **BBC News**, 21.01.2006, http://www.bbc.co.uk/albanian/news/2006/01/060121_rugova_profil.shtml, [16.10.2018].

³⁰¹ Enika Abazi, "Intrastate Conflicts, International Interventions and their Implications on Security Issues: Case of Kosovo", **Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, Copri Working Papers** 32(2001): 17.

³⁰² Ogulturk, "Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War", 219.

against Yugoslavia, while Russia as Serbia's natural ally opposed it. The Contact Group condemned the operations of the Serbian paramilitary forces and warned to impose an arm embargo to Serbia, if Serbs would not stop their attack in the territory of Kosovo, withdraw their paramilitary forces and permit international investigators to monitor the situation. Also during this meeting the Contact Group made it known that it would not support the idea of Kosovo Albanians for independence.³⁰³

International western community headed by USA attempted to find peaceful solution that would end the conflict between Belgrade and Pristina. USA was among the most active in this regard. On May 10, 1998, the special presidential envoy of USA, Richard Holbrooke, together with the Ambassador of USA to Macedonia Christopher Hill, were sent by the USA leadership to convince the Kosovo Albanians to negotiate with Belgrade. While on May 29, Bill Clinton received a delegation from Kosovo, promising that his administration would not allow a "second Bosnia" in Kosovo. Meanwhile, Christopher Hill in June 1998 met the KLA representatives. His insistence for the both sides was to sit down and negotiate. The idea of the dialogue was to restore the functionality of Kosovo institutions that was prior to 1989, ensuring internal security and the ability to conduct free elections. Meanwhile, the Albanian side requested certain conditions before starting negotiations, among them: unrestricted self-government; recognizing Kosovo as a constituent element of Yugoslaviathe right to organize referendum after 3 years and the international community to be guarantor of the realization of agreement.³⁰⁴

While the international community tried to find a solution by peaceful means, on January 15, 1999, Serbian paramilitary forces did another massacre, now in the village of Raćak. The number of citizens massacred by Serbian police was close to 45. The people who were murdered there were mostly men between the ages of 18 and 70, who were not wearing military uniforms. International journalists reported that most of the victims were too elderly to be KLA soldiers - additionally a woman and child were

³⁰³ **Ibid**, 220.

³⁰⁴ Xhenis Sulimani, **Neo Uillonizmi, Politika e Jashtme e SHBA'së dhe konfliktet ne Jugosllavi**, (Shkup: Logos-A, 2015), 70-72.

reported to be among the ones who have been killed.³⁰⁵ William Walker the head of the OSCE monitoring mission in Kosovo condemned the event declaring that, “I've seen all the ingredients of a massacre ... a lot of bodies up there, a lot of men who have been shot in various ways, but mostly very close up ... It's horrendous. It's a horrible sight,”. Additionally Walker stressed that:

“As a layman it looks like executions, it looks like people with absolutely no value for human life murdering these men, who to me look like farmers, they look like workmen, they look like villagers who certainly did not deserve to die in this fashion.”³⁰⁶

After the massacre of Raćak, Contact Group held another meeting on January 22, 1999. Representatives of this group came to the conclusion that shuttle diplomacy is not an effective instrument for this issue, for that reason they decided to bring the parties to the negotiating table. The first round of talks between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs took place in Rambouillet (France), between 6 and 17 February 1999. Both sides were unsatisfied with the Rambouillet plan. Kosovo Albanians accepted only the option of independence as the final goal of these negotiations, while Serbs categorically rejected the idea of NATO's presence in Kosovo. In other hand, NATO supported Contact Group's plan and fully supported Rambouillet negotiation process.³⁰⁷

Seeing that parties are not moving from their negotiation positions, international community decided to pressure them to sign the proposed agreement, which have to be acceptable for both parties. USA Secretary State Madeleine Albright in a press conference stressed that:

“If the agreement fails because Serbs say NO we will bombard them. If the agreement fails because the Albanian side will refuse to say YES, then we will not be able to support and help them”. The biggest pressure to sign the agreement had been made to the Albanian leadership of Kosovo. Albright addressed to the Albanian leadership with these words: “You have to understand that without agreement there is no intervention. If you do not decide you will be responsible for all the killed people. To be a leader means to take difficult decisions.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ “World: Europe Massacre in Kosovo”, **BBC News**, 19.01.1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/256364.stm>, [22.10.2018].

³⁰⁶ “World: Europe Racak Killings: Who Says What?”, **BBC News**, 22.01.1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/259835.stm>, [22.10.2018].

³⁰⁷ Mustafa Türkeş, Sait Akşit, “International Engagement, Transformation of the Kosova Question and Its Implications”, **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Vol. 38 (2007): 91.

³⁰⁸ Sulimani, **Neo Uillsonizmi, Politika e Jashtme e SHBA'së**, 75.

The next negotiations round was resumed on March 15, 1999. The new text that resulted from the negotiations foresaw, “an extended autonomy with self-government for all domestic issues such as economy, health, education, culture” and so on. According to the agreement, Kosovo was going to have her President and Parliament. The international community which included foreign troops and officials would guarantee the agreement. This format of autonomy was going to be realized for an interim period of three years. After this interim period of three years, it was foreseen to be organized international conference with the aim to decide the status of Kosovo. However, in principle, the agreement was going to preserve the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Serbia.³⁰⁹ The Kosovo Albanians finally was convinced and signed the agreement, but Serbs refused it. This was a casus belli for NATO, which immediately after the end of negotiations, prepared the military operation against Milošević regime.³¹⁰

On March 24, 1999 NATO launched an air campaign called Operation Allied Force. The operation objective was to halt the humanitarian catastrophe that was happening in Kosovo. After 78 days of bombing by NATO, through special Russian representative Viktor Cernomerdin, Milošević decided to lay down the weapons. After that, on June 9, 1999 in Kumanovo was signed the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the same day UNSC resolution 1244:

“Welcomed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia’s acceptance of the principles for a political solution which include immediate end to violence and withdrawal of its police and military forces and the deployment of an effective international civil and security presence, with substantial NATO participation.”³¹¹

2.2.3.3. Turkish Diplomacy in the War of Kosovo

Since the end of the Bosnian war, bilateral relations between Ankara and Belgrade began to normalize. After the Dayton Agreement, Turkey again opened its embassy in the capital of Serbia in Belgrade which was closed during the conflict in BiH. It should

³⁰⁹ Enika Abazi, “The Role of International Community in Conflict Situation. Which Way Forwards? The Case of the Kosovo/a Conflict”, **Balkanologie, Homo balkanicus**, Vol. 8, No.1 (2004): 29.

³¹⁰ **Ibid.**

³¹¹ “Kosovo Air Campaign, Operation Allied Force”, **North Atlantic Treaty Organization**, https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_49602.htm, [22.10.2018].

be noted that in the relations between Belgrade and Ankara there hasn't been crisis in the past. On the contrary, the Balkan pacts of 1934 and 1954 years are evidence of the creation of alliances against the potential external security risks of that time. Turkish leadership always has been in the position that there should be good relations with Serbia in order to achieve peace, security and stability in the Balkans. But the emergence of a new war in Kosovo obliged Ankara once again to review its relations with Serbia during the 1990s. Turkey this time was at a far more complicated situation than in the Bosnian war.³¹²

The general perception of Turkey's approach to the Kosovo war is seen as more cautious and passive than in the war in BiH. The reasons for such an approach are some. Among the first is the fact that while BiH was state within the Yugoslav federation, Kosovo was the province at that time. In this respect, under the constitution of the Yugoslav federation, BiH had the right to be separated from the federation because being a state, while Kosovo as well as Vojvodina as a province did not have that opportunity. For this reason, Turkey, before the beginning of the escalation of the conflict perceived this issue as an domestic problem that have to be resolved between the parties. This meant that Turkey had a very reserved approach to the demands of Kosovo Albanians because it was based on the constitution of the federation.³¹³

Another factor that perhaps refrained Turkey to have a more active role at the first stage of the conflict was the issue of perception. Bosnians feel and percept Turkey as their "homeland", and this perception perhaps put pressure on Turkey to have active approach in the solution of the conflict in Bosnia. While for Kosovo Albanians their "homeland" was Albania. In this circumstances is very natural that Albania to be the first protector. Additionally it should not be minimized also the fact that part of the Albanians with a nationalist feelings still have stereotypes and prejudices against Turkey as a successor of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire is blamed as a factor that prevented Albania from getting its independence earlier and with that had slowed the "embracing" of

³¹² Demirtaş Coşkun, "Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası", 58.

³¹³ **Ibid**, 59.

western values. This fact has also affected Turkey for having a cautious approach to this conflict.³¹⁴

Lastly, the similarities of Kurdish issue in south-east of Turkey with that of Kosovo, perhaps obliged Turkey to be cautious at the beginning of this conflict. But, the differences between KLA and PKK are much bigger than the similarities. In the legal point of view Kosovo was the province with autonomous rights based on the 1974 constitution of Yugoslavia, while in Turkey does not exist territorial division of the provinces in the model of Kosovo or Vojvodina. KLA had overall support from all over the Albanian population, whereas PKK is not supported by all Kurds which live and work in Turkey. Regarding the approach in the war, both structures are different. KLA headed its battles with the paramilitary forces of Serbia, but PKK despite targeting the Turkish army, also has done operations targeted toward civilians. Also, PKK from the international community is classified as a terrorist organization, while the KLA is not. Even though these facts, Turkish leadership at the beginning chose to be more reserved, but over time shifted its course to an active approach alongside the international community.

Although the aforementioned factors made Turkey to act with caution in the conflict of Kosovo, the first contacts between Turkey and the Kosovar leadership date in the early 1990s. In the years when the Yugoslav federation was in the last phase of his collapse, leaders of the federal state one by one came for an official visit to Ankara to get Turkey's support for the independence of their state. Among them was Ibrahim Rugova as leader of political processes of Kosovo which went on an official visit in Ankara on February 11, 1992. Turgut Özal was the first statesman who met Rugova in the Turkish capital. Adnan Merovci, one of the closest associates of Ibrahim Rugova state that the meeting held between Özal and Rugova has been very friendly. Merovci remember an anecdote between Rugova and a Turkish journalist in the press conference. The journalist asked Rugova that based on the large number of Albanians living in Turkey, would he require autonomy for Albanians within Turkish territory. Rugova with a smile replied that they have come in Ankara to seek the support of the Turkish state, for the Kosovo Albanians

³¹⁴ **Ibid**, 60.

who were still suffering under the Milošević regime. In fact, Rugova's main goal was to convince Turkey to recognize Kosovo's independence. But, President Özal refused Rugova's request for independence, promising political support.³¹⁵ The Prime Minister of Kosovo in exile, Bujar Bukoshi, was in the same line of expectations with Rugova. Prime Minister in exile Bukoshi visited Ankara on February 27, 1992. He also expected from Turkey to recognize Kosovo's independence, but Turkish foreign minister Hikmet Çetin emphasized that Kosovo is the province within the Yugoslavia and its recognition as an independent state is impossible.³¹⁶

After the realization of the meetings in the early 90s, the whole focus in the first half of the 1990s was to stop the war in Bosnia and return to normality in this country. Kosovo was not a priority issue for Turkey nor the international community as a whole. But after the Dayton Agreement things changed. After Bosnia, Kosovo was now the center of attention where day by day the conflict escalated more and more.

Ismail Cem on March 8, 1998 went for an official visit in Belgrade. Cem forwarded the message of President Demirel to Serbian President Milošević which was "To stop bloodshed in Kosovo". The one and a half hour meeting between Turkish Foreign Minister and Milošević was focused on the prevention of conflict in Kosovo. Turkish Foreign Minister also has conveyed to the Serbian leadership the opinion that Kosovo conflict will jeopardize the stability and security of the whole region. To overcome the situation, Turkish Foreign Minister has suggested the realization of the education agreement in Kosovo, agreed between Milošević and Rugova in 1996. According to the former Turkish Ambassador in Belgrade Alev Kiliç the proposal made by Cem was positively viewed by the Serbian president. According to Kiliç, the Yugoslav side seemed to view this proposal positively.³¹⁷

Serbian state news agency Tanjug claimed the opposite of what the Turkish foreign minister had stated. Milošević to this has reacted harshly replying that "No one should

³¹⁵ "Cili Ishte Burrështetasi i Parë që Kishte Takuar Ibrahim Rugovën?", **Telegrafi**, 17.03.2015, <https://telegrafi.com/cili-ishte-burreshtetasi-i-pare-qe-kishte-takuar-ibrahim-rugoven-foto/>, [22.10.2018].

³¹⁶ Ismail Soysal, Şule Kut, **Dağılan Yugoslavya ve Bosna Hersek Sorunu: Olaylar- Belgeler 1990-1996**, (İstanbul:Obiv Yayınları, 1997), 15.

³¹⁷ "Kosova'daki Kanı Durdurun", **Hürriyet**, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/kosovadaki-kani-durdurun-39009126>, [01.11.2018].

interfere in our country." According to Tanjug, Milošević have said that current situation in Kosovo can be resolved only within the framework of Yugoslav constitution and laws. The Serbian president also have stressed that events in Kosovo in no way will be accepted to be transferred to the international arena. To solve the crisis in Kosovo are taken necessary steps through police operation in cleaning the territory from the Albanian terrorists.³¹⁸ It should be also mentioned that Cem after his meeting with Milošević immediately returned to Turkey without visiting Kosovo's leadership in Pristina. The reason of overcoming Pristina perhaps could be the fact that Turkey did not want to give an image of supporting Kosovo's independence.³¹⁹

The Kosovo conflict also was a topic of the political parties in Turkey. The had several debates in the parliament regarding this topic. For example at the plenary session on March 10, 1998, the opposition strongly criticized the government for an incredibly cautious approach claiming that Albanians are not sufficiently supported by Turkey. Opposition parties stressed that government should be based on the 1974 in which Kosovo had her borders, and that instead of Turkey defending the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, should do it for Kosovo. The opposition also criticized the approach of the Turkish ambassador in Belgrade. According to them ambassador made just few visits in Kosovo in comparison with western ambassadors who had intense visits during the conflict. Mustafa Baş from the Fazilet Party criticized the Turkish ambassador for going to Kosovo only once a year.³²⁰

Hüseyin Kansu from Fazilet party on March 17, 1998 stated that Turkey must have a more active approach than it is currently doing. MP Kansu made parallels regarding the approach of Israel and Serbia, where Serbs committed murders against Albanians and that Ankara has only adopted the role of an onlooker. The MP's of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi- CHP), the other opposition party, also had criticism over the discourse of government towards the Kosovo war. MP Ali Dinçer on July 23, 1998 on behalf of the CHP group stressed that Ankara's approach to Kosovo was characterized as "cold" and that apart from autonomy should be taken into

³¹⁸ **Ibid.**

³¹⁹ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası", 61.

³²⁰ **Ibid**, 64.

consideration also the other models of solution. Meanwhile, MP Mümtaz Soysal as a representative of the Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Partisi-DSP) that was part of the government emphasized that for Kosovo's independence, Turkey currently has no arguments to support it. According to Soysal it would not be appropriate from Turkey's part to declare something about the change of country's borders.³²¹

Apart from the opposition MPs who called for open support over the cause of Kosovo Albanians, the columnist Hadi Uluengin supported the same position. He emphasized that Turkey must determine her position on the side of Albanians, and be a part of the international community framework, or better said, Turkey is obliged to be in the USA side against the Serbian aggression. This approach of Turkey can be justified by various factors starting from the moral aspect and minimal justice if in case exist. Apart of this the historical, geographical, sociological and strategic interests determine this approach toward this issue.³²²

Foreign Minister Ismail Cem responded to the criticism by the opposition parties pointing out that the primary goal is to stop the bloodshed in Kosovo. He considered unfair the criticism of Turkey's position in supporting the territorial integrity of Serbia, given the fact that Turkey is a signatory of many international agreements in which the respect of the territorial integrity of other states is emphasized. According to Cem:

“This terror and oppression must end, and then, in the existing borders without claims of divisions, all peoples living in Kosovo should enjoy a wide range of real and non-fictive rights. At the moment is very hard to find a compromise because the issue has two opposite extremes: one party is determinant in terms of its independence from Serbia, while the Serbian side has seen this issue as an internal problem that must be solved within the laws and constitution of the Serbian state.”³²³

Summarizing the views expressed by MPs in the debates realized in parliament regarding the Kosovo issue, on March 16, 1998 in the government's meeting the current implications for Kosovo were discussed. In this meeting an evaluation regarding the views of Turkish government was made, formulated in a 6-item recommendation package where it was proposed to:

³²¹ *Ibid*, 64.

³²² Hadi Uluengin, “Kosova, Londra Ankara”, *Hürriyet*, 11.03.1998, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kosova-londra-ankara-39009475>, [20.10.2018].

³²³ Aksu, “Kosova Krizinde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası”, 63.

- “1. Begin a broad dialogue between the authorities of the Yugoslav federation and the Kosovar leadership.
2. In the dialog, a state or organization should be allowed to undertake a facilitating function where both sides agree.
3. Immediately should be initiated a dialogue in order to restore all rights to all ethnic groups in Kosovo as in the period where Kosovo had autonomy, and additionally apart from the option of autonomy should be open space for other options and solutions.
4. In finding a final solution for the Kosovo issue, which will ensure the rights of the majority ethnic group which are Albanians, the rights of other minorities including the Turkish minority, must be guaranteed.
5. In case of conflict or possible provocations that lead to conflict, it should be taken effective measures with the contribution of the international community.
6. The international community should contribute urgently in the recovery of economic and fundamental needs of the people of Kosovo and internally displaced persons.”³²⁴

In addition to the meeting with the Serbian president, Turkish diplomacy was also present on international platforms. After intensification of conflict between Serbian paramilitary forces and KLA guerrillas, on March 25, 1998, Contact Group held a meeting in which Turkish Foreign Minister was also present. Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem had high expectations from this meeting, hoping that there will be concrete results.³²⁵ In this meeting USA proposal was immediately to impose sanctions on the Yugoslav Government, but this proposal was postponed because Russia pledged that would support a UN resolution for a sweeping embargo on the government of President Milošević. Few days after the USA proposal, Security Council imposed embargo on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.³²⁶

It is worth noting that Ismail Cem conveyed two important messages / proposals regarding the Kosovo conflict. The first had to do with the establishment of Balkan Peacekeeping Force. Hypothetically, if the situation in Kosovo escalates, immediately the Peacekeeping force needs to be in their positions and available to act. The second message was more about a possible mobilization in case of worsening of the situation in Kosovo, it must be thought how international community will help in organizing

³²⁴ **Ibid**, 64.

³²⁵ “Sırlara Bir Ay Süre”, **Milliyet**, 26.03.1998, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/sirlara-bir-ay-sure-5365823>, [15.01.2021].

³²⁶ <https://www.un.org/press/en/1998/19980331.SC6496.html>, [16.01.2021].

countries like Macedonia and Albania in possible crises which they can be faced.³²⁷ These proposals were not taken into account much in the meeting of the Contact Group, but it is worth noting that later it turns out that proposals given by Cem were effective in preventing the conflict.³²⁸

For the Turkish leadership, their main preoccupation was the possible extension of the Kosovo war throughout the whole region, and this situation can damage harshly the national interest of Turkey. Analyzing the possible scenarios, the most probable was if Kosovo Albanians would gain independence, automatically Albanians in Macedonia would follow the same steps which can provoke disintegration of Macedonia and with that causing a regional conflict. In order to prevent such a scenario Turkey enhanced its military support to Macedonia. In June 1998, negotiations took place between the governments of Turkey and Macedonia on the delivery of 20 F-5 planes to the Macedonian army and the training of Macedonian pilots in Turkey.³²⁹ Turkey also contributed to the NATO naval force positioned in the port of Durres (Albania) and from March 1998 proposed her participation in a peacekeeping force.³³⁰

The issue of Kosovo was a topic of discussion at the Trilateral Balkan Summit between Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, which was held on April 16-17, 1998 in Antalya. At the summit were present the presidents of the states, interior and foreign ministers of the participating countries. Discussions took place on various topics such as human trafficking, organized crime, weapons, terrorism, drugs, including the Kosovo issue. Leaders emphasized their position for finding a long-term solution which should be supported by other countries in the region.³³¹

From this tripartite summit the presidents issued a joint statement expressing:

³²⁷ Aksu, "Kosova Krizinde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası", 65.

³²⁸ **Ibid.**

³²⁹ Sylvie Gangloff, "Turkish Policy towards the Conflict in Kosovo: The Preeminence of National Political Interests", **Balkanologie**, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 2004, <https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/517#tocto1n2>.

³³⁰ **Ibid.**

³³¹ "Balkanlar Antalya'da", **Sabah**, 17.04.1998, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1998/04/17/r03.html>, [08.11.2018].

“The readiness of their states to continue the consultations with the Contact Group. Regarding any measure toward Yugoslavia should be taken into consideration the political and economic stability of South-Eastern Europe and interests of the states of the region”.³³²

In the statement particularly was highlighted the significance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states in the Balkans region, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. According to summit participants, a longterm peaceful agreement to the Kosovo problem have to be find through constructive and peaceful dialogue among the parties and to be based on the protection of the rights of the ethnic and religious communities living in Kosovo, in the line with the Charter of the UN, the standards of the OSCE and the Helsinki principles.³³³

The issue of Kosovo also was theme of discussion at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of South East European Countries held in Istanbul on June 8-9, 1998. In this meeting the foreign ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia were present, including the Turkish Foreign Minister as the host of the event. While in the status of observers were present the representatives of USA, Italy, France, Russian Federation, Germany, Council of Europe, European Commission, OSCE, UN, NATO, UN, BSEC, World Bank, Southeast European Cooperation Initiative, Royaumont Process and Central European Initiative.³³⁴

In the opening speech Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem as a host emphasized that, “Issue of Kosovo have acquired a serious dimension and this increases big concern. Any form of violence, excessive use of force and all forms of terrorism have to be stopped immediately in Kosovo”.³³⁵ Cem additionally said that, “Turkey's frank wish is

³³² “Joint Statement Issued After a Meeting of the Presidents of Turkey, Bulgaria And Romania (Antalya, 16-17 April 1998) April 20,1998”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-statement-issued-after-a-meeting-of-the-presidents-of-turkey_-bulgaria-and-romania-_antalya_-16-17-april-1998__br_april-20_1998.en.mfa, [10.11.2018].

³³³ **Ibid.**

³³⁴ “Final Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of South East European Countries Istanbul Declaration On Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South Eastern European Countries 09 June 1998”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/final-meeting-of-the-ministers-of_-foreign-affairs-of-south-east-european-countries-istanbul-declaration-on-good-neighbourly-relations_-stability_-security-and-cooperation-in-south-eastern-european-countries_br_09-june-1998.en.mfa, [14.11.2018].

³³⁵ “The Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Countries of South Eastern Europe Opening Statement by Mr. İsmail Cem, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey 8-9 June, 1998”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-meeting-of-the-ministers-of-foreign->

that talks for a solution to this problem start as soon as possible. Furthermore the influx of refugees has created a tragic situation for the masses concerned and serious problems for neighboring countries”.³³⁶ Lastly Turkish Foreign Minister emphasized that the Kosovo issue must be resolved before it is too late and all states in the Balkan region must consider this problem with the utmost responsibility.³³⁷

In this meeting, all foreign ministers had a speech. Among them the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Živadin Jovanović stressed that Kosovo issue was an internal matter and no one should not interfere. This stance received critical reactions from other ministers. Greek Minister Theodoros Pangalos replied that issue of Kosovo is not an internal issue because is paralyzing trade relations in the region and is creating an influx of migrants.³³⁸ While Albanian Minister Paskal Milo stressed that is worrying the fact that ethnic cleansing policies are still being implemented. He said that there are burned villages in Kosovo, children and women killed and around 20 thousand refugees who have been sheltered in Albania. Milo said that in case the situation continues like this, may include other countries of the region in crisis.³³⁹ The biggest concern of the foreign ministers was the possibility of spillover effect of this conflict. The consequences would be multidimensional, starting from the political, economic, social, etc.

From this ministerial meeting, stakeholders expressed concern about the issue of Kosovo which could have implications for peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkan peninsula. Ministers stressed the need for the continuation of the talks between Belgrade and the leadership of Kosovo believing that this dialogue must be conducted in order to find the solution of this problem. They also share the opinion that in case the problem remain unresolved could have a very negative repercussions on the process of the

affairs-of-countries-of-south-eastern-europe-_br_opening-statement-by-mr_-ismail-cem_-foreign-minister-of-the-republic-of-turkey_br_8-9-june_-1998.en.mfa, [14.11.2018].

³³⁶ **Ibid.**

³³⁷ **Ibid.**

³³⁸ “Kosova Kurtulsun”, **Milliyet**, 09.06.1998, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1998/06/09/dunya/dun02.html>, [10.11.2018].

³³⁹ **Ibid.**

integration of Balkan region in EU.³⁴⁰ Such stance expressed concern also among the states from Balkan region that have ambition to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic structures. For this purpose, their call was the achievement of a peaceful solution that would overcome the crisis.

Foreign ministers also welcomed the readiness of international organizations to help towards the stabilization of Kosovo. They also convey the message of their states that are ready to contribute together with the Contact Group in order to achieve final solution for the Kosovo issue. Ministers unanimously stressed that these negotiations had to preserve the human and civil rights of residents of Kosovo.³⁴¹ It should be emphasized that in this ministerial meeting, consensus for final declaration wasn't reached, but the satisfactory part is the momentum of open and frank exchange of views between the parties. Turkish journalist and columnist Sami Kohen stated that Yugoslavia's participation at the Istanbul conference and listening the comments and warnings by other foreign ministers was an important moment.³⁴²

In the ministerial meeting in Istanbul, was noticed that all countries of the region had expectations from the international community to help in resolving the problem of Kosovo. Turkey also supported this idea. Turkish leadership tried to communicate with the Serbian leadership to overcome this problem in the lightest form, but this was not taken into account. For this reason, the only alternative for solution was either achieving an agreement through dialogue or military intervention, but always under international community framework.

Balanced and very careful approach of Turkey in the Kosovo's issue to certain extent can be justified. Turkey was constantly targeted from Greece and Serbia with accusations that is trying to return back to its warrior tendencies. And these accusations by default stopped Turkey to act individually to solve the conflict. Turkish president Turgut Özal in

³⁴⁰ "Final Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of South East European Countries Chairman's Summary on the Situation in Kosovo June 9,1998", **Republic of Turkey Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/final-meeting-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-south-east-european-countries_br_chairman_s-summary-on-the-situation-in-kosovo_br_june-9_1998_br_en.mfa, [14.11.2018].

³⁴¹ **Ibid.**

³⁴² Sami Kohen, "Sırlara Mesaj Verildi, ama...", **Milliyet**, 09.06.1998, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1998/06/10/yazar/kohen.html>, [15.11.2018].

1993 paid official visits in some Balkan states, and this visits was perceived as “provocation” by the Minister of National Defence of Greece, Gerasimos Arsenis. Greece together with Serbia accused Turkey of having tendencies of reverting the period of Ottoman Empire. This kind of accusations obliged Turkey to act cautiously and without taking side in the conflicts in Balkan region. For Turkey there was no other option except to join the international community in joint action.³⁴³

Turkish diplomacy did not stop at devoting herself to the Kosovo issue. Turkish President Süleyman Demirel paid an official visit in the Republic of Macedonia on October 2, 1998. Demirel at the joint meeting stressed that both countries support the peace and stability of the region. Both, Macedonia and Turkey have the same view on the Kosovo issue similar with the international community. Turkish president expressed the desire for a quick solution of the problem through dialogue with the help and contribution of international community. Turkish President Demirel pointed out that in the case of worsening of the situation in Kosovo, Macedonia will be the first state to suffer the biggest consequences. Meanwhile, Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov called for the solution of the problem through dialogue by preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and respecting the rights of the all ethnic and religious groups.³⁴⁴

In the joint press conference the two presidents emphasized that:

“Kosovo issue should be resolved through peaceful ways and within the territorial integrity of Yugoslavian Republic. The two presidents shared the view that Kosovo should be granted a status that would fulfill the ethnic, cultural, social and religious rights of all minorities, taking legal rights under protection, and relying on a democratic pluralistic administration.”³⁴⁵

Kosovo also was the main topic of discussion in the Summit of the Southeastern European Countries' Heads of States and Governments held in Antalya on October 12-13, 1998. This summit can be considered as one of the most important ones of that time, because it was achieved a common agreement by all participants (including Yugoslavia

³⁴³ Sylvie Gangloff, “The Weight of Islam in the Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkans”, **Turkish Review of Balkan Studies**, No. 5 (2000-2001): 98.

³⁴⁴ “President Demirel in Macedonia- Official Contacts between Demirel and Gligorov Concluded - Cooperation Agreements Signed between the Two Countires”, **HR-Net**, 03.10.1998, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/1998/98-10-03.anadolu.html#01>, [12.11.2018].

³⁴⁵ **Ibid.**

and Albania) for a joint declaration. As host of the summit Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz stressed that the main goal of the Balkan countries is to solve the Kosovo issue within the framework of the UN resolutions and within territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. According to the Turkish Prime Minister the summit can be underlined for its diplomatic and political success, because it had been the only international event where Yugoslavia and Albania agreed for a joint declaration, regarding the Kosovo issue.³⁴⁶

The joint declaration that was supported by all participant in the summit calls on:

“All parties in the Kosovo dispute to agree to an immediate cessation of violence, the inauguration of immediate dialogue without preconditions, a political solution based on Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and a large degree of autonomy and self-government for Kosovo”.³⁴⁷

Immediately after the joint declaration from the Summit of Southeastern European Countries, on October 16, 1998 in Belgrade the agreement was signed between Minister of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia and the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE in order to enable OSCE to establish a verification mission in Kosovo. On October 25, 1998, OSCE established the Kosovo Verification Mission deploying 2,000 OSCE staff aiming to verify the ceasefire.³⁴⁸ But even though Serbia was part of the joint declaration and signed the agreement with OSCE, confrontations between Serb paramilitary forces and KLA guerrillas continued further. On December 1998 near Podujevo FRY security forces had a battle with KLA.³⁴⁹ Later, in January 15, 1999, the Rečak Massacre occurred where Serb security forces killed around 45 civilians of Albanian origin. This event alarmed the international community and gave reason to not wait anymore for a solution to the problem through dialogue. The only solution of this conflict was the military intervention against Serbia.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ “Balkan Countries Summit- Prime Minister Yılmaz: ‘Antalya Summit is Successful as Kosovo Question has been Discussed in an Atmosphere where Yugoslavia Participates’ “, **HR-Net**, 13.10.1998, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/1998/98-10-13.anadolu.html#03>, [14.11.2018].

³⁴⁷ “Yugoslavia Joins Balkan Nations in Common Position on Kosovo”, **HR-Net**, 14.10.1998, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/trkpr/1998/98-10-14.trkpr.html#12>, [14.11.2018].

³⁴⁸ “Kosovo Verification Mission set up”, **OSCE**, <https://www.osce.org/kosovo/58550>, [15.11.2018].

³⁴⁹ “A Kosovo Chronology”, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/cron.html>, [15.11.2018].

³⁵⁰ Nigel Thomas, K Mikulan, **The Yugoslav Wars (2) Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia 1992-2001**, (Osprey Publishing, 2006), 49.

Based on the situation in Kosovo, at the end of December (1998), the Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs once more through the press release called on parties involved in the conflict, to stop fighting right away. The Turkish leadership emphasized that peace and stability of Kosovo have to be achieved through providing the rights to all citizens of Kosovo based on the Constitution of Yugoslavia of 1974.³⁵¹

2.2.3.4. Participation of Turkey in the NATO Operation in Kosovo

Despite many efforts of the international western community to convince the leadership of Serbia to resolve the conflict of Kosovo in a peaceful way, was not successful. Serbia led its policy with miss calculations that resulted in a fatal epilogue after NATO's intervention. In 1999, Kosovo was evacuated by the international peace monitors, while NATO was ready for air attack.

Turkey as an relevant regional state, was in constant communication with the international community, particularly with NATO as well as with countries of the region that potentially could be part of the problem in case the conflict escalated even more.

So, on March 2-3, 1999, Albanian Prime Minister Pandeli Majko, went on an official visit to Turkey. Prime Minister Majko held meetings with the Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, President Süleyman Demirel and with the Commander of Armed Forces, General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu. The most important topic of the meeting was focused on the ways of resolving the Kosovo crisis and protection of the territorial sovereignty of Albania from a possible attack by the Serbian army.³⁵²

According to the military attaché of Albania in Turkey, Colonel Hajro Limaj, General Kıvrıkoğlu guaranteed to Albanian Prime Minister comprehensive military support in the protection of the sovereignty of Albania through concrete routes which would be applied in accordance with the upcoming developments on the ground. Prime Minister Majko satisfied from the meeting, addressed to Colonel Limaj with the words “Turkey once again shown that it is true friend and strategic ally”.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Altunya, “The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey”, 119.

³⁵² Limaj, **Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës**, 178.

³⁵³ **Ibid**,180

After the visit, on March 29, 1999, Prime Minister Majko through Albanian military attaché in Ankara announced the Turkish leadership that in northern Albania, Serbian army have bombed several times with artillery, and her military sub-divisions continue to penetrate into the Albanian territory. Prime Minister Majko requested from his Turkish counterpart Ecevit to make a strong statement for the media which clearly states the real support of Turkey in defense of the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Albania.³⁵⁴

Following the request of Prime Minister Majko, in the same night in front of media Prime Minister Ecevit stated that, Turkey and her Military Forces are side to side with the brother Albanian people and no one can touch the territorial sovereignty and integrity of Albania. Prime Minister Ecevit, additionally stressed that if it is necessary, Turkey together with Albania will defend Albania and Albanian people which for Turkey and Turks are considered as a brothers.³⁵⁵

During this period Turkey through military aircraft deployed the necessary equipment in direction to the Albanian army.³⁵⁶

Based on the previous experience in the Bosnian war, Turkish government requested permission by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) to send troops in Multinational Joint Force of NATO in Kosovo. This permission was approved by decision number 596 from TGNA dated on October 8, 1999.³⁵⁷ It can be seen that Turkish leadership had foreseen several months ago the possible scenario that implies the difficulty of achieving peace through diplomatic means in the conflict of Kosovo and that only solution seemed to be a military operation under the umbrella of NATO.

The failure of Rambullie process, inhumane behavior of Serbian paramilitary forces in Kosovo, previous experience regarding the time frame miscalculation on intervention in BiH were factors that influenced the international community represented by NATO to

³⁵⁴ “Kosova e Vitit 1999, Turqia Gati Trupat të Ndërhyjë Ushtarakisht”, **Telegrafi**, 18.03.2013, <https://telegrafi.com/kosova-e-vitit-1999-turqia-gati-trupat-te-nderhyje-ushtarakisht/>, [22.11.2018]

³⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

³⁵⁶ **Ibid.**

³⁵⁷ Hüseyin Aydın, “Türkiye’nin Yurtdışına Asker Gönderme Kararlarında Yasama ve Yürütmenin Rölü”, (Master thesis, Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Konya, 2010), 83.

initiate a military operation against Serbia that began on March 24, 1999. Operation Allied Force was planned to bomb Serbia's strategic military points in order to remove Serbian military troops from Kosovo. In the operation participated 112 USA and 102 allied strike aircraft. From 19 NATO member countries, 13 countries sent military aircrafts to participate in the operation. Turkey was among the participant countries.³⁵⁸

The official statement of Turkish Foreign Ministry on the first day of the NATO operation against Serbian targets emphasized that:

“Being a country which attributes importance to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Balkans and having historic, human and cultural ties with the region, Turkey has made great efforts to the resolution of the conflict through peaceful settlement. However, it has been observed that the Serbian regime has not shown willingness to work towards fulfilling the expectations of the international community and the whole of Kosovo’s population. On the other hand, the acceleration of violence in Kosovo and the increase in the number of displaced people and migrants as a result of this has turned the conflict into a humanitarian drama. Turkey regrets the stage that the Kosovo issue has reached and is worried about possible future developments. The attitude of the FRY has made the phased military options for NATO inevitable. Being a NATO member, Turkey gives full support to North Atlantic Council's (NAC) phased military measures. Although the issue has reached such a critical stage, we wish the Belgrade regime had acted with common sense and gave a positive response to the expectations of the international community”.³⁵⁹

As noted, Turkey not only gave declarative support to NATO military operations against Milošević's regime, but also made a direct contribution. At the beginning, Turkey participated with one frigate in the Adriatic Sea and 11 F-16 warplanes for air defense. Later, in early May, the number of jets was increased with + 7 more, in total 18 F-16 warplanes.³⁶⁰ During the operation Allied Force, Turkish jets had flown for two thousand hours.³⁶¹ Upon request of NATO to benefit from Turkish bases, the Council of Ministers of Turkey on April 27, 1999 allowed to be opened the airports of Bandırma and Balıkesir to NATO warplanes including the airport in Çorlu for the use of tanker aircraft.³⁶² Also in case that NATO decide for operation of combat ground forces,

³⁵⁸ Rebecca Grant, “The Kosovo Campaign: Aerospace Power Made It Work”, **An Air Force Association Special Report** (1999): 8.

³⁵⁹ Altunya, “The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey”, 132.

³⁶⁰ Ali Balcı, **Türkiye Dış Politikası, İlkeler, Aktörler, Uygulamalar**, (İstanbul: Etkileşim Yayınları, 2013), 224.

³⁶¹ Ahmet Çevikbas, “Müttefik Güç Harekâtı İnsani Müdahalelerin Bir İstisnası mıdır? NATO' nun Kosova'ya Yönelik Harekâtının Uluslararası Hukuk ve Askeri Bakış Açılarından Değerlendirilmesi”, **Savunma Bilimleri Dergisi**, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Kasım 2011): 31.

³⁶² Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, 512.

Turkey was ready to participate. A decision from the TGNA already existed, and a battalion composed of an armored unit and mechanized unit was ready.³⁶³

During the military operation of NATO, Kosovo's neighboring countries like Albania, and Macedonia were overpopulated with Kosovo Albanian refugees. In this countries the Turkish Red Crescent has given valuable contribution in constructing refugee camps. Turkish President Süleyman Demirel visited these camps and blamed Serbs for the genocide against the Kosovo Albanians. Demirel stressed that Milošević would not achieve his goals in Kosovo and the Serbian president must take responsibility for the war crimes. The camps that were constructed by Red Crescent sheltered around 6400 refugees, while around 18000 refugees were received in Kırklareli at the camp for refugees called "Gaziosmanpaşa"³⁶⁴ where Turks from Bulgaria were sheltering in 1989.³⁶⁵ Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit declared that Turkey was prepared to host 20,000 Kosovo refugees, providing extensive stocks of food and tents. Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit consider this help as a humanitarian duty. Lastly, Ecevit emphasized that Turks and Albanians from Kosovo are brothers and relatives of Turks from Turkey.³⁶⁶

At the beginning of May 1999, in Kırklareli at the refugee accommodation center "Gaziosmanpaşa", came for a visit the President of the Republic of Northern Cyprus Rauf Denktaş and the Turkish President Demirel. Denktaş stated that Cyprus was ready to accept around 20 thousand of the Kosovo Albanian refugees in Maraş (Gazimağusa) but the UN was against this proposal. Denktaş declared that Cyprus at least is ready to take orphaned kids for a temporary vacation. Meanwhile, President Demirel initially expressed his welcome to refugees in Turkey and said to them that they will soon return to their homeland. Kırklareli governor Kemal Önal briefed both presidents on the

³⁶³ Carol Migdalovitz, "Kosovo: Greek and Turkish Perspectives", **United States Congressional Research Service**, (1999): 3.

³⁶⁴ Aydın, "Türkiye'nin Yurtdışına Asker Gönderme", 83.

³⁶⁵ Sedat Ergin, "Demirel ve Kosova krizi", **Hürriyet**, 14.04.1999, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/sedat-ergin-demirel-ve-kosova-krizi-39073145>, [23.11.2018].

³⁶⁶ Christiane Amanpour, "NATO Nations to Take in Kosovo Refugees :U.S.,Turkey, Germany Offer Temporary Asylum", **CNN News**, 04.04.1999, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9904/04/kosovo.refugees.02/index.html>, [20.11.2018].

number of pupils and the situation of teachers in the "Peace School for Kosovo" devoted to the education of refugee children.³⁶⁷

Meanwhile after the NATO offensive against Yugoslavia, the political and military spokesperson of KLA Xhavit Haliti appealed to the Turkish President Demirel for the first time in the newspaper *Hürriyet* to refuse accepting refugees from Kosovo. Instead, all refugees coming to Turkey should return back. Based on the historical experience, Haliti emphasized that Albanians have twice migrated to Turkey and have never returned. This policy does not help Kosovo Albanians. Instead, this approach favors Milošević policies for emptying Albanians from Kosovo.³⁶⁸

On the other hand, the KLA request from Turkish leadership to help Albanian refugees in Albania and Macedonia. Haliti points out that Kosovo Albanians are expecting the biggest support from Turkey, both politically and financially. He said that:

“In the ground operations we do not expect military support from Turkey. It is important for Turkey to support us financially and send weapons, we will fight. But for that we need help. And our eyes will look primarily towards Turkey.”³⁶⁹

Efforts made by Turkey were a testimony for sincere willingness to take care of refugees fleeing from the war. Turkish President Demirel assigned Ahmet Acet as ambassador in Belgrade who was also special representative for Kosovo regarding the refugee crisis. Ambassador Acet's task was to convey the message of Turkish President to the presidents of Albania and Macedonia regarding the supply of aid to the Kosovo Albanian refugees in these countries. While on the other hand, Foreign Minister Ismail Cem was present at the meeting of EU foreign affairs ministers and the representatives of international charitable associations in Luxembourg where it was foreseen to be discussed the issue for the ensure of humanitarian aid to Kosovo.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ “Kosovalı Çocukları Bize Verin”, *Yeni Şafak*, 02.05.1999, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/kosovalı-cocukları-bize-verin-584558>, [20.11.2018].

³⁶⁸ “UÇK'dan Türkiye'ye Çağrı: Mültecileri Geri Gönderin”, *Hürriyet*, 19.04.1999, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/uckdan-turkiyeye-cagri-multecileri-geri-gonderin-39074494>, [22.11.2018].

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ “Balkanlar'a Demirel Damgası”, *Hürriyet*, 08.04.1999, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/balkanlara-demirel-damgasi-39072184>, [21.11.2018].

The declaration of president of Macedonia Kiro Gligorov "sealed" the testimony of Turkey's contributions in the provision of living conditions and taking care for Kosovar refugees. Gligorov has pointed out that from all NATO countries only Turkey has kept the promise of taking care of the refugees.³⁷¹

Another important fact should not be overlooked that has to do with pursuing of USA policies by Turkey regarding the Balkan region during the 1990's. Any decision taken by the USA regarding the Balkans has been supported by the Turkish leadership as well. Pure examples was the USA involvement in the resolving of the conflict in Bosnia 1994-95, recognition of the independence of the states of the former Yugoslavia, signing military agreements with Macedonia and so on. Turkish foreign policy was in line with that of the USA by recognizing the independence of the states of the former Yugoslavia, signing military agreements with Macedonia in April 1995 and July 1996 and with BiH in August 1995 and January 1996. Also USA and Turkey undertook a cooperative initiative to re-arm and train the Croat-Muslim army through the Train and Equip Program. The same approach was also when the conflict of Kosovo was intensified in 1998 where both USA and Turkey, supported politically and militarily states like Albania, Macedonia and the Bosnian-Croat Federation.³⁷²

In this context, there was constant communication between Turkey and the USA during the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. On April 6, 1999, Turkish President Süleyman Demirel sent a letter to the USA president about the drama of Kosovo Albanians. In his letter Demirel emphasized that there is a need to be taken urgent action to prevent the humanitarian catastrophe as a consequence of Milošević 's policies of ethnic cleansing. For this reason, Demirel states that now it has turned to an obligation to act as soon as possible in order to ease the agony of innocent people who have fallen victim to inhumane crimes.³⁷³

Meanwhile on April 20-27, 1999, was held the NATO's 50th anniversary where leaders of all NATO members were gathered in USA. Among them was Turkish president

³⁷¹ "Sadece Türkiye Sözünü Tutu", **Hürriyet**, 10.04.1999, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/sadece-turkiye-sozunu-tuttu-39072534>, [20.11.2018].

³⁷² Gangloff, "The Weight of Islam ",100.

³⁷³ Limaj, **Midis Ankarasë dhe Tiranës**, 196.

Süleyman Demirel. On April 23, Turkish President met the USA President Bill Clinton. At this meeting Clinton expressed gratitude to Turkey for their dedication and support for Kosovo. Clinton emphasized that NATO had a firm position concerning the issue of Kosovo. The role of Turkish leadership regarding this issue can be taken as an example for all NATO allies. Turkey's quick response in helping refugees has gained great respect in USA and the rest of the states. Lastly, Clinton stressed that USA together with the NATO allies will continue to collaborate closely regarding the issue of Kosovo.³⁷⁴

NATO's Allied Force operation launched on March 24, 1999, ended successfully on June 10, 1999. The operation lasted for 78 days. After three-month military operation, Milošević regime agreed to withdraw its military and police forces from the territory of Kosovo. On June 9, 1999, was signed the Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in Kumanovo. In the same day, United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, which gave to the UN the right to govern in Kosovo and assigned the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Two days later, after the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević accepted the agreement conditions, Turkey and its military personnel participated in the multi peacekeeping force KFOR, that entered in Kosovo.³⁷⁵

Immediately after the incorporation of UNMIK, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, proposed the establishment of the group known as "Friends of Kosovo". The aim of the Secretary General was to have regularly discussions with the international organizations and governments as well as with civil society, that can help the Secretary General to realize the mandate of UNMIK. The "Friends of Kosovo" group consisted of three international organizations and sixteen states. As participant country in this group was Turkey too.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ "Clinton'dan, Demirel'e Kosova İçin 'Teşekkür'", **Sabah**, 05.06.1999, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1999/06/05/g07.html>, [21.11.2018].

³⁷⁵ Dzihat Aliju, Sibel Vezaj, "NATO' nun Yugoslavya'yı Bombalamasının 19. Yılı", **Anadolu Ajans**, 24.03.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/natonun-yugoslavyayi-bombalamasinin-19-yili/1098051>, [23.11.2018].

³⁷⁶ "Secretary-General Holds High-Level 'Friends of Kosovo' Meeting on UN Efforts to Rebuild Shattered Province", **Reliefweb**, <https://reliefweb.int/report/serbia/secretary-general-holds-high-level->

Turkey contributed in the NATO-led international peacekeeping force (KFOR) with 1000 peacekeeping troops. Turkish soldiers were positioned in Southwestern Kosovo where the Turkish community predominantly lives, or more exactly in Dragaš, Mamuša and Prizren. Participation of the Turkish military within KFOR had another symbolism. For the first time after 86 years, Turks return in Kosovo, but now with a peacekeeping mission. The first contingent of Turkish peacekeepers that arrived in Prizren was under the command of Brigadier General Mehmet Ali Erdoğan. The Turkish military convoy was greeted with a festive atmosphere in Prizren from the crowd of which was consisted predominantly by local Turks.³⁷⁷ The Turkish peacekeeping troops were stationed at the soldier barracks named as a "Sultan Murad Barracks. Naming the soldier barracks in "Sultan Murad" and stationing the Turkish peacekeeper soldiers in that region was a satisfaction moment for the Turks of Kosovo as well as the Muslim Albanians. The perception of Serbs regarding this issue was different. They perceived this as a second invasion by the Turks. Apart from the foreseen tasks of the Turkish military personel, they also organized various educational and cultural activities, made various donations such as clothes, food and books to the citizens of the region. This initiatives created a positive perception for Turkey and the Turkish army. It should be mentioned that around 100 Turkish policemen were part of the Interim Civil Administration of Kosovo.³⁷⁸

Within international peacekeeping force a unit of 163 Turkish soldiers additionally were deployed in Albania who were responsible for providing safe transfer of humanitarian help to refugees from Kosovo, who leave their houses from the war and found shelter in Albania during the fighting between Serbia and NATO alliance.³⁷⁹

friends-kosovo-meeting-un-efforts-rebuild-shattered; "Daily press briefing of office of spokesman for Secretary General", **United Nations**, <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990625.DB062599.html> , [24.11.2018].

³⁷⁷ "86 Yıl Sonra Prizren'de", **Yeni Şafak**,

<https://www.yenisafak.com/arsiv/1999/temmuz/05/dishaber/dis1.html>, [30.11.2018].

³⁷⁸ Caner Sancaktar, "Türkiye'nin Balkanlar Politikası:1990 Sonrası Balkan Acılımı", **Türk Dış Politikasında Yeni Yönelimler**, ed. Hasret Çomak, Caner Sancaktar (İstanbul:Beta Basım Yayım, 2013): 669-670.

³⁷⁹ Altunya, "The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey", 134.

2.2.3.5. The Status of the Turkish Minority in Kosovo After NATO Intervention (1999)

After the end of conflict, one of the main priorities of Turkey was the status of the Turkish minority in Kosovo. In the meeting of the "Friends of Kosovo" organized by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at June 30, 1999, participated also Ismail Cem. One of the key priorities of the Turkish foreign minister was to emphasize the preservation of the Turkish minority rights in post-war Kosovo.³⁸⁰ Immediately after this meeting, Ismail Cem on July 17, 1999 paid an official visit to Kosovo. The purpose of the visit was realization of working meetings with the stakeholders in which minister Cem wanted to emphasize that Turkey is ready to provide assistance in the rebuilding of Kosovo in economic and political terms and with that creating space for long-term peace in the territory of Kosovo.³⁸¹ Cem met with KFOR's British Commander-in-Chief Michael Jackson at the NATO Headquarters in Kosovo. Immediately after the meeting, he participated in the opening of Turkish coordination office in Pristina and met with Kosovo Albanian leaders, among whom the leader of KLA Hashim Thaci. During the meeting with Thaci, Cem made it known to him that Turkey expects from the Kosovo leadership to treat Turks with care. After Cem finished the official meetings, addressed to the media, stating that:

“Despite the catastrophe that happened in Kosovo, we are still happy. We are opening a Turkish coordination office. We want to be present and contribute to the political and economic structuring of the region. Turkey conducts activities through the Red Crescent. To the British Commander-in-Chief I said that Kosovo for all is important, but for Turkey has another meaning. For centuries we shared history and culture in these lands. Our soldiers are doing a historical duty for being guardians of peace in Kosovo.”³⁸²

Regarding Turkey's approach to Kosovo and the Turks of Kosovo in an interview for the Turkish Daily News, Ismail Cem pointed out that:

“Turkey is not making any discrimination between ethnic Turks and ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. For 500 years we shared a common history, a common state and common destiny as equal citizens of the Ottoman Empire. No one was a second class citizen. No one was more privileged

³⁸⁰ Kader Özlem, **Türkiye'nin Balkan Türkleri Politikası (1991-2014)**, (Bursa: Dora Yayınları, 2016), 299.

³⁸¹ Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç, Bestami S. Bilgiç, “Kosova Türkleri: ‘Sıradışı’ Bir Türk Diasporası”, **Bilgi**, No. 62 (2012): 51.

³⁸² “Cem: Kosova’da Barışın Bekçisiyiz”, **Hürriyet**, 18.07.1999, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/cem-kosova-da-barisin-bekcisiyiz-39091741>, [02.12.2018].

than others. In a way, we consider them historically as our people, all of them, all Kosovars, without any distinction.”³⁸³

Cem also points out why Turkey has paid so much attention to the Turks of Kosovo. He emphasized that issues related to the Turks of Kosovo need to be handled with more delicacy and sensitivity. That's why he as a Turkish minister was so frequently involved regarding this issue within NATO. Cem said that he had to insist strongly in order to have Turkish troops deployed close to Prizren, where most Turks live. At the end he succeeded.³⁸⁴

The reason why Turkey paid so much attention to the Turks of Kosovo during and after the war, it refers to the situation in which the Turks of Kosovo lost the status of being a balancing factor. A lot of Serbs that lived in Kosovo abandoned their homes going in Serbia. In this situation, the Turks did not have the role of being an important factor or balancing power between the two nations. Current situation presents Albanians as the absolute majority and for this reason Cem emphasized the need to pay attention and care to the Turkish ethnic group and to not come in the situation of discrimination by the Albanian majority.

Despite the efforts by Turkish leadership requesting for care and protection of the rights of Turkish minority in Kosovo, with the Interim administration (UNMIK) Turks didn't enjoy the rights that they had in the Yugoslav constitution of 1974. UNMIK did not want to recognize the former constitutional status of Turkish minority. The constitution of 1974 recognized the Turkish language as equal with other languages, namely Albanian and Serbian, and UNMIK does not. The problem of language was the key issue for the friction between the Turkish community and the interim administration.³⁸⁵

In the new constitutional draft within the UNMIK governance, Turkish language was not planned to be incorporated as one of the official languages of the country. But, the loss of the status of Turkish language as an official language, did not deprive them of the right to education and publication in their mother tongue. After increasing criticism by

³⁸³ İsmail Cem, **Turkey in the New Century: Speeches and Texts Presented at International Fora (1995-2001)**, (Lefkoşa: RUSTEM, 2001), 138.

³⁸⁴ **Ibid.**

³⁸⁵ Nazif Mandacı, “The Turks of Kosovo and the Protection of Minority Culture at the Local Level”, **Perceptions**, Vol. 9, Issue 2 (Summer 2004): 68.

the Turkish side towards the Special Representative of UN Bernard Kouchner, he addressed to the Turkish society through official letter stating that they could continue to use their mother tongue in their own region. The interim administration also reduced the number of Turkish lessons at the school and did not want to publish official documents in Turkish for the local elections. As a result of these policies, Turkish minority boycotted the elections held in October 28, 2000.³⁸⁶

After the publication of the results from the local elections in Kosovo, the Turkish Foreign Ministry reacted through the press release expressing concern toward withdrawal of Turks and other ethnic groups from the local elections. In the statement of the ministry the reaction of the Kosovar Turks to boycott the elections was justified since the Turkish language was deprived from having “equal status with Albanian and Serbian languages in the registration forms”.³⁸⁷

In May 2001, Ismail Cem again visited Kosovo. After visiting the Turkish coordination office he also met the Turkish leadership of Kosovo. Turkish Democratic Union Party leader Mahir Yağcılar after meeting with Minister Cem in the press conference provisional constitution of Kosovo stated that as political party but also as a community that lives in Kosovo they support this initiative. But their expectations are the protection of the rights of Turks gained before 1989. In this meeting Yağcılar stressed the gaining of Turkish rights for the first time in 1951 and for this reason during the August or September they wanted to organize a ceremony for the 50th anniversary of this date. Yağcılar also said that Kosovo Turks are interested in building a Turkish cultural house and reopening closed newspapers in Turkish. Yagcilar addressed all these requests for support to Ismail Cem.³⁸⁸

In 2001, Turks of Kosovo marked a progress in terms of the linguistic barriers that took place one year previous in the local elections, and which they boycotted. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, voter registration forms were prepared and printed in Turkish language, which motivated Turkish society actively to participate in the elections. In this

³⁸⁶ Demirtaş Coşkun, “Kosova’nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası”, 66-67.

³⁸⁷ Altunya, “The Kosovo Crisis and Turkey”, 142-143.

³⁸⁸ “İsmail Cem Kosova’ya Ayak Bastı”, **Hürriyet**, 10.05.2001, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/ismail-cem-kosovaya-ayak-basti-39242433>, [05.12.2018].

context, minority issues have been raised more strongly in the Assembly of Kosovo and have been sought solutions for this issue.³⁸⁹

It should be emphasized that state agencies of Turkey and civil society in general have made a great contribution in the improving of the quality of the life of citizens of Kosovo, particularly the Turks. TİKA is one of the most active agencies which through various projects contributed in different fields such as education, health, agriculture, business etc. Also the Turkish religious affairs directory (Diyanet) during this period was active in Kosovo. Diyanet awarded scholarships to the successful students. Since 1991 a considerable number of Kosovo Turks students has enrolled in Islamic studies in Imam Hatip Lisesi in Turkey. Turkish civil society and private institutions also contributed in Kosovo. Among them Turkish business association have provided aids such as educational materials for students in Mamusa, food and hygiene products and so on. For the Turkish teachers from Kosovo the organization “Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları” provided education and specialization in Turkey.³⁹⁰

What can be said is that from the interim administration (UNMIK) to date, Turkey's relations with Kosovo at all levels have been in progress direction. Turkey contributed remarkably to the re-buildig of Kosovo after the war, but later on also will be seen that its diplomatic contribution towards Kosovo's independence in 2008 has been very important. Turkey lobbied in the international community for the recognition of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state.

2.2.3.6. The role of Albanian Community in Turkey during the Kosovo War and her Efforts to Influence Towards Turkish Leadership

Turkey is characterized by her multicultural environment as a result of being the successor of Ottoman Empire, which had a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. After the dissolution of Ottoman Empire and establishment of the republic, Turkey lost most of her non-Muslim communities but on the other hand gained considerable non-Turkish speaking Muslim groups from the lands that in the past were part of the

³⁸⁹ Özlem, *Türkiye'nin Balkan Türkleri Politikası*, 307.

³⁹⁰ Gangloff, “Turkish Policy towards the Conflict in Kosovo“.

Ottoman Empire, especially from the Balkan region through migration and population exchange.³⁹¹

Among non-Turkish speaking Muslim groups were undoubtedly the Albanians. In the chronological context, three periods mark the migration of Albanians to the territory of Turkey. The first is related with the period of Ottoman Empire, where the Albanians were located to the Marmara and Aegean regions as part of the Ottoman Empire's military and administrative structure. The second period marks the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, with refugees fleeing from the wars in the Balkans. These people mostly were sheltered in Eastern Thrace and Anatolia. And the third period of migration is in the twentieth century. Albanian migrants mainly came from Kosovo during the 1950s, 1970s and 1999, and those coming from Albania after 1990. Albanian migrants from the third period mostly live in the western parts of Turkey in metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa etc.³⁹²

Taking into consideration the large number of Albanians who have migrated to the territory of Turkey, especially during the period of the 1950s and 1960s, significant number of associations representing the Albanian community have been established. Mainly, Albanian established organizations organized activities of cultural and social character in order to help new emigrants to find lodging and work. After the 1990s, some of these organizations started to have political preoccupations. Their focus mainly was on the issue of Kosovo.³⁹³

In this perspective among the most active associations with lobbying purposes for the Kosovo issue was the Turkish-Albanian Brotherhood Association. The association was established in 1952, and its founders were mainly Albanians coming from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Şerife Geniş, Kelly Lynne Maynard, "Formation of a Diaspora Community: The History of Migration and Resettlement of Muslim Albanians in the Black Sea Region of Turkey", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 45, No. 4 (July 2009): 553.

³⁹² **Ibid**, 553-554.

³⁹³ Gangloff, "Turkish Policy towards the Conflict in Kosovo".

³⁹⁴ Interview with Qamil Bityçi, director of Kosovo's Cultural Center in Istanbul and former secretary of the Turkish-Albanian Brotherhood Association, 15.11.2018.

Regarding the activities of the association after the 1990's, her former secretary Qamil Bityçi stressed that:

“With our arrival at the head of the organization's management on May 9,1991 immediately we started activities related to the Kosovo issue. In the framework of the first activities was the invitation of the leadership of Kosovo led by Fehmi Agani and Rexhep Boja, in June 1991. Together with the leadership of Kosovo we went in Ankara. There were held meetings with the parliamentary groups of DYP and ANAP. The purpose was to raise awareness of the public regarding the situation of Kosovo.”³⁹⁵

In international context the aim of Kosovo's leadership was to lobby for the republic, but based on the circumstances, the conditions were not ready yet for this purpose. Then the maximal goal was to show to the world the pressures that Serbian regime was placing upon ethnic Albanians.

Speaking about Turkish-Albanian brotherhood association Qamil Bityçi explained about how they organized meetings for the president Ibrahim Rugova with the Turkish leadership in 1992. He stated that upon to the invitation by Turkish-Albanian Brotherhood Association, on January 1992, Ibrahim Rugova came in Turkey to realize meetings with Turkish Parliament Speaker Ahmet Hüsametdin Cindoruk and with Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in Ankara. While on January 12, 1992 was realized panel discussion with Kosovar Albanians in Zeytinburnu. Around 1500 people were present.³⁹⁶ Bityçi also explained that the association arranged an appointment tu Rugova with President Turgut Özal, but in that period Özal was ill. The cabinet of President Özal postponed all his planned meetings for four days. Rugova returned to Kosovo and the meeting was fixed to be held in February. On February 11, 1992, President Rugova together with Adnan Merovci and Avni Spahiu comes again to Ankara to make his first official visit with President Turgut Özal. For the leadership of Kosovo this meeting has been at the highest levels in the world at that time. According to Bityçi, Serbian media have reported that this information is false, meaning that there have been no meetings with the Turkish leadership. But when the photos from meetings were published, the Serbs were negatively surprised.³⁹⁷ But it should be noted that in these meetings,

³⁹⁵ **Ibid.**

³⁹⁶ **Ibid.**

³⁹⁷ **Ibid.**

leadership of Kosovo requested support for independence, but Turkish leadership promised just political support excluding the promise for independence.

The activity of the “Turkish-Albanian Brotherhood Association” was primarily oriented to work in 4 segments. First, to mobilize the Turks with Albanian origin to support the Kosovo issue. In this regard the first action was the organization of a protest in November 1992 in front of the Yugoslav Consulate in Istanbul. The presence was symbolic with around 50 protesters, as a result of the lack of spreading the information for this activity. The second protest was done at the beginning of the Kosovo war on March 8, 1998. The number of people estimated to have been around 10,000. In addition to this, in May 1998 was established a solidarity committee for Kosovo, whose purpose was the gathering of humanitarian aid for the Albanian people of Kosovo.³⁹⁸

The second segment was focused on having influence toward Turkey’s leadership. Apart from the above mentioned visits in the beginning of the 90s, since the start of the war in Kosovo, on March 10, 1998, Edita Tahiri in the position of Secretary for Foreign Affairs within Democratic League of Kosovo paid a visit in Ankara. Representatives of the association together with Tahiri met MPs of Turkish parliament, who were scheduled to have a speech on the Kosovo issue. Among them were Suha Tanık, Ahmet Prishtina and Mustafa Baş. According to Bityçi the speeches of Turkish MPs were focused on the violation of human rights more exactly the pressures and massacres made by the Serbian regime in Kosovo.³⁹⁹

The third and fourth segment within the association activities were the close communication with the media and contacts with the academic circle. As for communication with the media, Bityçi states that they had constant communication with the Kosovo Information Center. From the information center the most relevant news were shared to the association in Istanbul, and the association forwarded the information to the Turkish media. Regarding the relation with the academic community, this was done through the publication of the Besa magazine. Besa magazine started with her publication by the end of 1998. The editor of the magazine was Murat Ay. There were

³⁹⁸ **Ibid.**

³⁹⁹ **Ibid.**

published six edition, and the focus of the magazine was regarding the Kosovo and Albanians.⁴⁰⁰

Qamil Bityçi also refers to the approach of Turkish leadership during the Kosovo war making comparisons with the Bosnian war. According to him, Turkey's approach to Kosovo was not as the Albanians expected. As compared to the Bosnian war, Turkey has been more supportive to BiH than Kosovo. It may have been because the struggle of Bosnian Muslims was focused more on the Muslim identity, while in Kosovo it dealt with national struggle. In addition, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a republic and Kosovo was an autonomous region. These were the factors that determined the cautious approach of Turkish leadership regarding the war of Kosovo.⁴⁰¹

Regarding the position of the Turkish authorities in relation to such organizations or "lobbying" groups who have operated in Turkey, the Turkish government has never expressed open support for these associations. For example the demonstration organized in spring 1998 was not authorized and the police tried to stop the destination route of the protesters which was the Yugoslav Consulate.⁴⁰² But on the other hand, authorities did not take any measures to ban these activities. A concrete case was the opening of the "Kosovo Representative Office" in Istanbul, which did not receive any official support and any representative of the Turkish government was not present, but nothing was done to ban this inauguration. It seems that these kind of networks played an very important role in providing information for the Turkish authorities on the local situation, as well as acting as a "bridge" between Turkish and Albanian leadership.⁴⁰³

2.2.4. Turkey's Approach in the Macedonian Internal Conflict of 2001

The internal conflict in Republic of Macedonia in 2001 was an armed conflict between the ethnic Albanian "National Liberation Army" (NLA, a militant group) and the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia. The conflict started at the beginning of February 2001. The aim of the NLA was to expand the rights for the Albanian minority,

⁴⁰⁰ **Ibid.**

⁴⁰¹ **Ibid.**

⁴⁰² Gangloff, Gangloff, "Turkish Policy towards the Conflict in Kosovo ".

⁴⁰³ Sylvie Gangloff, "The Impact of Ottoman legacy on Turkish Policy in the Balkans (1991-1999)", November 2005, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en/node/2824>.

which was estimated as comprising up to 25% of the population.⁴⁰⁴ Since the war in Kosovo, the predictions were that as the result of a spillover effect a new conflict could occur in Macedonia, which actually happened. The conflict mainly took place in the north-west of the country to the surroundings of the capital Skopje.⁴⁰⁵ NATO prevented wider escalation of the conflict, intervening and stopping the fights, but the tensions between the parties involved in the conflict still continued. After several month of tension, on August 13, 2001 with the mediation of EU and NATO representatives, a compromise was agreed between the political parties to sign the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which brought a cease-fire and demilitarization of the NLA.⁴⁰⁶ In this conflict more than two hundred people died. Police Forces (army and police) lost about sixty members. More than 100,000 people were displaced, while a smaller number found refuge beyond the borders of Macedonia.⁴⁰⁷ The Ohrid Agreement, apart from having stopped the conflict, also defined the basic directions of political activity, the aims of establishing equality of all national groups, setting the legal framework for further economic development as well as created a new climate with real ambition to integrate the country into North Atlantic structures.⁴⁰⁸

In achieving these objectives, the state and the society of Macedonia will be guided by the basic principles set in the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The first principle completely and unconditionally rejects the use of violence for achieving political purposes. The second principle preserves the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity and its unitary character. The third principle preserves the multi-ethnic character of state, which must reflect in public life. The fourth principle foresees a modern democratic state which must be ensured that her constitution fulfill the needs its citizens and aligns with the highest international standards. And the last principle focuses on the development of local self-government, an a determinant aspect for encouraging the

⁴⁰⁴ "Who are the Rebels", **BBC News**, 20.03. 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1231596.stm>, [20.02.2019].

⁴⁰⁵ Michael Kubiena, "Skopje 2014 - Musealizing the City, Re-inventing History?", **The Western Balkans Policy Review**, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (Winter/Spring 2012): 85.

⁴⁰⁶ **Ibid.**

⁴⁰⁷ Milaim Fetaj, "Ndikimi i marrëveshjes së Ohrit në rrugëtimin e Maqedonisë drejt Bashkimit Evropian", (PhD thesis, Universiteti i Tiranës Instituti i Studimeve Evropiane, Tirane, 2012), 209.

⁴⁰⁸ **Ibid.**, 210.

active democratic participation of the citizens and respecting the identity of all people living in Macedonia.⁴⁰⁹

Upon the invitation of Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, Macedonian Foreign Minister Srgjan Kerim paid a visit in Ankara on March 17, 2001. The main topic of discussion was the Macedonian internal conflict. At the press conference, Ismail Cem stated that:

“Turkey's most important support in prevention the conflicts in the border regions of Macedonia was her diplomatic role. We want all of our friends in the Balkans to show respect to their territorial integrity which are recognized by international agreements. We encourage Albanians and Macedonians to work together.”⁴¹⁰

Additionally Cem emphasized that Macedonia and Turkey signed agreements in the segment of security and there are ongoing projects in this field. Cem added that he would travel to Brussels in the next days and would share his analysis and thoughts with the member states of NATO alliance.⁴¹¹ While Macedonia's Foreign Minister Kerim called on, “international community not to allow Macedonia to become a source of instability”.⁴¹² Additionally he stressed that the battles in border region between Macedonia and Kosovo does not affect only Macedonia, but the whole Balkans.⁴¹³

Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem paid a visit in USA on March 29, 2001. After a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Cem at the press conference talked for the Macedonian internal conflict. He emphasized the importance Macedonia carries for Turkey. Additionally Cem added that he plans to organize a visit to Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. Regarding the Turkey's acitivsm in the Balkans, Cem indicated that USA officials highlighted “the role Turkey plays for the continuation of the stability in problematic states in the Balkan region”.⁴¹⁴ During this visit in USA Turkish Foreign

⁴⁰⁹ Official document of Ohrid Framework Agreement, 13.08.2001, http://www.siofa.gov.mk/data/file/Ramkoven_dogovor_al.pdf.

⁴¹⁰“Foreign Minister Cem and his Macedonian Counterpart”, **HR-Net**, 17.03.2001, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/2001/01-03-17.anadolu.html#18>, [03.03.2019].

⁴¹¹ **Ibid.**

⁴¹² “Macedonian Foreign Minister Kerim in Ankara”, **HR-Net**, 18.03.2001, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/2001/01-03-18.anadolu.html>, [04.03.2019].

⁴¹³ **Ibid.**

⁴¹⁴ “FM CEM Says U.S. Displays Positive Approach in Iraq which is to Interest of Turkey”, **HR-Net**, 31.03.2001, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/2001/01-03-31.anadolu.html>, [04.03.2019].

Minister held an interview for CNN in which he evaluated the current situation in the Balkans denying a rivalry of influence between Turkey and Greece. He further rejected that Turkey (along religious lines) is closer to the Albanians and Greece to the Slavs, stressing that:

“We are in the same direction with Greece as far as the chaotic situation in the Balkans is concerned. Under the umbrella of NATO, both states protect the same theses. This implies that both countries, Turkey and Greece are opposed to any armed conflict in the region with ethnic or religious background.”⁴¹⁵

Immediately after Ismail Cem's visit to the USA, in March 30, 2001 in Antalya was organized the 11th International Conference on Security and Cooperation. During this event, National Defense Minister Sabahattin Çakmakoglu expressed Turkey's worries concerning the violent incidents which take place in Macedonia. According to him, “EU must be in close cooperation with allies in the region”, adding that the support should be oriented on the political, economic and diplomatic fields. Additionally Çakmakoglu said that Macedonia was a great example of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society, therefore it should be supported in all fields.⁴¹⁶ While NATO Deputy Secretary General Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo underlined the importance of Turkey within alliance stating that, “Turkey's proximity to the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Mediterranean puts her at the centre of a crucially important strategic area. That is why Turkey will remain a key part of the European security equation.”⁴¹⁷

Regarding the issue of possible religious clash in the Balkan region, it should be noted that this thesis has been present since the early 1990s, especially during the war in BiH. It was about an eventual clash of green transversal vs orthodox axis. But there has been constant denial of such form of conflict. The response of Ismail Cem in his interview in CNN once again confirms the position of Turkey regarding this issue.

Even, to undermine this theses in the case of the Macedonian conflict from non formal information was rumored that Turkey has supplied the Macedonian army with weapons to neutralize the insurgency of the NLA. From the interviews that we made with senior

⁴¹⁵ Minister of Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem, Anadolu Agency Archives, 29. 03. 2001.

⁴¹⁶ “National Defense Minister Cakmakoglu: Turkey is Closely Following Developments in Yugoslavia”, **HR-Net**, 31.03.2001, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/2001/01-03-31.anadolu.html>, [04.03.2019].

⁴¹⁷ “Speech by the Deputy Secretary General - 11th International Antalya Conference on Security and Cooperation”, **NATO**, 30.03.2001, <https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s010330a.htm>, [06.03.2019].

Macedonian state officials at that time, some of them categorically denied that Macedonia has received weapons by Turkey. While there were also stances that Turkey during the conflict helped Macedonia with military equipment.

Commenting Turkey's approach to Macedonia's internal conflict, the current president of Macedonia Stevo Pendarovski emphasize that:

“Turkey was cautious and neutral in the conflict of 2001. There were people who doubted more exactly ethnic Macedonians who thought that through the line of Islam, Turkey could help the Albanians. But at that time the presence of the religious element in the thinking of the Turkish political elite was not present at all. Each time when Turkish leadership visited us, they came with a proposal that NATO has to be present and support in solving the conflict, which means they always proposed solution within the framework of the alliance.”⁴¹⁸

Meanwhile, the former prime minister and defense minister during the 2001 conflict Vlado Bučkovski was in a same line of stance as Pendarovski, pointing out that:

“In the internal conflict of 2001, when it was most critical, Turkey was trying to contribute within international community through NATO, EU and USA. Turkish leadership of that time wanted to have a political solution of the problem, so there was no tendency from Turkey as a result of the religious element to give any kind of support to the National Liberation Army.”⁴¹⁹

Additionally he stated that because of the influence that Turkey has on the Muslim community in the Balkans, Turkey's tendency was to come to a diplomatic solution rather than creating some kind of provocations between the parties involved in the conflict. Bučkovski says that in resolution process the roles within international community were been divided skillfully and diplomatically. He once again confirmed that:

“In the reports I have read during my political career regarding the 2001 conflict, Turkey is nowhere mentioned that have given support to the so-called KLA, and at least on our part there have been no remarks about Turkey's behavior in this conflict”.⁴²⁰

While Antonio Milošoski, Macedonia's former foreign minister during 2006-2011 and government spokesman during 2000-2001, had different stance from Pendarovski and Bučkovski. According to Milošoski, Macedonian leadership at the time had great relations with Turkey. He said that:

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Prof. Dr. Stevo Pendarovski, former spokesperson of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2001, and member of the cabinet of two Macedonian Presidents Boris Trajkovski and Branko Crvenkovski. From May 2019 was elected as a new president of the Republic of Macedonia. 13.02.2019.

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Prof. Dr. Vlado Bučkovski, former Minister of Defence in 2001, and prime minister of the Republic of Macedonia between 2004-2006, 03.04.2019.

⁴²⁰ **Ibid.**

”The president Boris Trajkovski had a good communication with his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Necdet Sezer. In 2001, during the conflict there were two countries, Turkey and Ukraine, both of which for various reasons provided support in purchasing additional equipment and military weapons. The support during wartime was done to preserve the country's territorial integrity, which is an important issue for both Ukraine and Turkey. From the Turkish perspective, that support was given with good intention to support a friendly state such as Macedonia.”⁴²¹

That Turkey paid attention to the situation in Macedonia shows the frequent presence of the foreign minister Cem in Macedonia. On May 11, 2001, in a time when the parties were still in conflict, Cem visited Macedonia and had meetings with the leadership of this country. He once again stated that Macedonia has a special importance for Turkey. He stressed that this state was faced with serious issues and that Turkey express her readiness to help Macedonia to overcome this situation, especially when it comes to the preservation of sovereignty and the integrity of the international border lines, which is one of the basic principles of Turkish foreign policy.⁴²²

After a month, more exactly on June 13, 2001, Minister Cem again visited Skopje. Referring to the situation, he stated that crisis in Macedonia does not derive only from extreme Albanian nationalism but is a dual problem. Cem points out that in the country there are attacks directed against Albanians, Turks and in general Muslims.⁴²³ This stance comes after the information that ethnic Macedonian right-wing extremists attacked not only ethnic Albanians but also ethnic Turkish civilians. In certain places, houses and shops of Turks have been attacked which has forced them to abandon their places and escape. This approach threatened to have dangerous disruption and clashes between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Macedonia.⁴²⁴

But after several month of clashes, on August 13, 2001 with the mediation of EU and NATO, was achieved a compromise between the parties invloved in the conflict through the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which brought a cease-fire and disarmament of the NLA.

⁴²¹ Interview with Antonio Milošoski, former spokesperson of the government of Republic of Macedonia in 2001, and former foreign minister during 2006-2011. He is currently a member of parliament from the VMRO-DPMNE party. 29.11.2019.

⁴²² Rahman, “Makedonya'da Turk Azinlik”, 150.

⁴²³ **Ibid**, 151.

⁴²⁴ Sami Kohen, “Makedon Türkleri Diken Üstünde”, **Milliyet**, 21.06.2001, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/06/21/yazar/kohen.html>, [15.03.2019].

Regarding the resolution of the conflict Antonio Milošoski stated that the initiative to resolve the conflict in 2001 was largely based on the presence of Javier Solana as EU envoy and James Pardew as USA envoy. They mostly dominated with political and diplomatic agreement initiatives to end the conflict. Generally Milošoski evaluate that Turkey didn't have a big role in the conflict resolution in Macedonia. He said that:

“What we have heard in NATO forums where the issue of Macedonian crisis was discussed, Turkey was part of the countries that expressed readiness for any initiative that will bring to faster political stabilization of the country and an agreement that will end the crisis. So in that part I think they had positive approach but they were not dominant.”⁴²⁵

Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in his speech to the Turkish Parliament on October 1, 2001 welcomed the Ohrid Framework Agreement by saying that:

“Turkey has closely followed the circumstances which Balkan region was faced. In this regard, our country made significant effort in the international platforms for achieving peace and stability in this region. The readiness for implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement Turkey represents good news. Maintaining peace, stability and territorial sovereignty are key factors for a prosperous future in this region. In addition to this, we would like to emphasize that the preservation of the security and stability of our Turkish brothers has been and continue to be among the basic priorities of our country.”⁴²⁶

Just like in the war of Bosnia and Kosovo, for the refugees from Macedonia, Turkey was the most suitable destination for shelter. Firstly, the entry to Turkey did not require a visa. Secondly the majority of refugees had their relatives in big cities like Istanbul, Izmir or Bursa. Most of them stayed in the houses of their relatives, but some were sheltered in the Gaziomanpaşa guest house near Kırklareli in Thrace. In total, 12,000 refugees came to Turkey. After the conflict, all of them returned to Macedonia.⁴²⁷

Turkey's presence in Macedonia continued even after the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Namely, in the post-conflict period, Turkey within the framework of NATO mission, played a vital role in establishing and preserving peace and stability in the country. From 4500 NATO troops, around 150 Turkish troops participated in the disarming of NLA members in the Essential Harvest operation, a process that began on 15 August, 2001 and lasted for one month.⁴²⁸ Turkey's military

⁴²⁵“Interview with Antonio Milošoski”, 29.11.2019.

⁴²⁶ Dervishev, , “Türkiye - Makedonya İlişkileri”, 57.

⁴²⁷ Sylvie Gangloff, “The Relations between Turkey and Macedonia: The Incoherencies of a Political Partnership”, **Turkish Review of Balkan Studies**, No. 6 (2001): 22.

⁴²⁸ Ali, “Надворешна Политика на Турција”, 209.

forces also participated in the second NATO security mission called operation Amber Fox. The mission started on September 27, 2001 with an three-month mandate, which subsequently was extended until 15 December 2002.⁴²⁹ Apart of Essential Harvest and Amber Fox operation, Turkish army also took place in the Allied Harmony mission, which lasted until March 31, 2003. After the security duty passed from NATO to the EU, the Turkish state, through its military members (10 in total)⁴³⁰ took part in Concordia⁴³¹ and Proxima⁴³² missions which lasted until December 15, 2005.

Through participation in peacekeeping missions with her military troops in BiH, Kosovo and most recently in Macedonia, Turkey once again showed her potential as a regional factor and a good ally of NATO. This shows that Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkan region has been quite cautious which means Turkey never was interested to play the "Muslim card" in any of the Balkan conflicts. Apart of this Turkey never shown any signal to take any unilateral military operation in the Balkans. On the contrary, all her military operations in the Balkans have been implemented within a multilateral context. Turkey clearly showed her direction towards securing peace and stability as a condition for better regional prosperity.⁴³³

From the elaboration it can be said that since the independence of Macedonia in the early 1990s, Turkey has been a strategic partner and supportive of all integration processes of Macedonia. Turkey also constantly supported the independence and the recognition of the country under her constitutional name and because of this approach the Greek press called Turkey as a self-proclaimed lawyer of Macedonia.⁴³⁴ Apart from this, the peace and stability of this country has been of particular importance to Turkey. Primarily because in Macedonia there is ethnic Turkish community and one of the principles of Turkish foreign policy is the care of Turkish communities living outside

⁴²⁹ "Operation Amber Fox (Task Force Fox)", **NATO**, <https://www.nato.int/fyrom/tff/home.htm>, [15.03.2019].

⁴³⁰ Dov Lynch and Antonio Missiroli, "ESDP Operations", **Institute for Security Studies**, <https://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/ebooks/files/09-dvl-am.pdf>, [15.03.2019].

⁴³¹ <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/concordia/>, [15.03.2019].

⁴³² https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/proxima-fyrom/index_en.htm, [15.03.2019]

⁴³³ F. Stephen Larrabee, Ian O. Lesser, **Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty**, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), 96.

⁴³⁴ Gangloff, "The Relations between Turkey and Macedonia", 26.

Turkey.⁴³⁵ The second reason concerns the geostrategic position of Macedonia. Concretely, we refer to the international European route e-75, which represents a ground connection between Turkey (through Greece) and Europe. Any instability of Macedonia would make it difficult the movement of Turkish citizens from Europe to Turkey. The same applies to the transport of goods. The bilateral relation, regardless the changes of the governments of one or another state has continued with the same dynamics. From the later elaboration of the thesis we will be witness to this approach.

2.2.5. Concluding Remarks

From the elaboration of the first chapter it can be concluded that after the end of the Cold War and the change of the international system, Turkey was given the opportunity to have active foreign policy in her neighboring regions such as the Middle East, Black Sea, Caucasus or the Balkans. In the context of the Balkan region, during the 1990s Turkey has largely penetrated the region through two elements, diplomacy and the military.

In terms of the first element, that of diplomacy, it is worth noting that Turkey initially established diplomatic relations with the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which had proclaimed their independence. Turkey also intensified her relations with Albania that had just transited from the communist system in liberal democracy and market economy. In addition, Turkish diplomacy was active in her efforts to help in overcoming the conflicts that dominated the territory of the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The wars in Yugoslavia were a series of ethnic conflicts, wars for independence, and insurgencies fought, happened from 1991 to 2001, which consequently came to the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation in 1992. Her constituent republics declared independence, despite unresolved issues between ethnic groups in the new states, thus provoking the wars.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ “Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun (Kanun No. 5978)”, **Resmi Gazete**, 24.10.2010, <https://ytbweb1.blob.core.windows.net/files/resimler/mevzuat-pdf/5978.pdf>, [16.03.2019].

⁴³⁶ Alastair, **The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991–1999**, 8.

In the initial conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia, the Turkish leadership did not take any concrete action except than statements with peaceful message. While in the Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts, her active approach was more visible. It can probably be said that the greatest attention of Turkish diplomacy in the Balkan region during the 1990s was precisely in Bosnia and Kosovo. Her efforts to help in finding solution in bilateral meetings with the parties involved in the conflict, as well as initiatives undertaken within international organizations such as the OIC, OSCE, CoE, etc. in which aimed to raise the awareness to the international community regarding the problems that Balkans was facing, presents an argument for active Turkish diplomacy.

Apart Turkey's diplomatic activism in this period, it is worth noting that the military presence was not missing either. The Turkish army was part of NATO military operations during the conflict in Bosnia, as well as in Kosovo. Also, according to some statements of the protagonists of that time, it is said that Turkey was among the countries that secretly helped Bosnian Muslims with weapons, despite UN Security Council Resolution number 713 that enacted an arms embargo on Yugoslavia for all deliveries of weapons and military ammunition. In addition, the Turkish military has participated in all post-war international peacekeeping missions in the countries of the former Yugoslavia such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo as well as in the insurgency in Macedonia in 2001 between ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army and Macedonian security forces. Also during 1997, the Turkish army participated in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Albania, as a result of the chaos caused by the by pyramid scheme failures.

The reasons for Turkey's activism during this period in the Balkan region were several. The first had to do with the new opportunities for establishing diplomatic relations and cooperation in various fields with different states, as a result of the post-Cold War circumstances and the new international system. In this regard, Turkey was not only present in the Balkans, but also to other regions such as the Caucasus, the Black Sea or the Middle East.

Secondly, it had to do with the protection of the Ottoman heritage on the continent of Europe. The Turkish leadership, estimated that the expansion and continuation of the

conflicts in the Balkans would erase the whole Ottoman heritage on the old continent. This meant that the destruction of this region also meant the extinction of every element of the Turkish presence in Europe. Thirdly, is related with the care of the Turkish community in the Balkans and other ethnic communities belonging to Islam. These people even today are important factor in Turkish foreign policy. In most of the bilateral meetings with the Balkan countries, one of the topics addressed by Turkey is the care for these communities. In addition, in all the conflicts happened in the Balkans, Turkey has been one of the first countries to offer shelter to these people.

And lastly, has to do with the geopolitical aspect. It has been mentioned before that the Balkans are a transit route between Turkey and Western Europe. Any conflict or unrest in this region would have consequences both in terms of Turkey's security but also in economic terms in the context of free movement of people and goods. For this reason, what forced the Turkish leadership to have an active diplomacy towards the Balkan region was also related to the fear of blocking the Balkan route to Europe that would cause consequences, especially for Turkish businesses.

Also, the initiative to establish the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) by Turkey during the 1990s was a significant diplomatic success. The possibility of economic cooperation between countries of three regions such as the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Balkans was a idea welcomed by many countries.

Meanwhile, the beginning of the 2000s in Turkey marked the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party. The coming to power of the JDP gave a new approach to foreign policy with the inclusion of new elements of action, which were different from the practices of the 1990s. The next chapter will analyze Turkey's foreign policy under the JDP within the Western Balkans.

3. THE TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY: FROM EUROPEANIZATION TOWARD NEO OTTOMAN APPROACH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (2002-2015)

3.1 Turkish Foreign Policy Under Justice and Development Party at the Beginning of XXI Century

In general context, the paradigm shift in Turkish Foreign Policy is thought to have started at the end of 1990s with changes in the practices, concepts and principles of its foreign policy. This period marked the political rapprochement between Greece and Turkey, additionally Turkey was granted EU candidate country status from the European Council in December of 1999. These were the first signs that encouraged Ankara's political leadership to develop a more open and active and less hard-security foreign policy which was the case during the period of the 1990s.⁴³⁷

Further developments were made with the coming to power of the JDP in 2002, giving shape to a more active foreign policy, especially in close regions which in the past were part of the Ottoman Empire. This meant having an active approach in the Balkans as well. Turkey's activism of the 1990s in the Balkan region continued, but the methodology of the policy implementation was changed after the new international and regional priorities of Turkey. As Birgül Demirtaş said:

“In the turbulent 1990s, Turkey’s foreign policy focused mainly on political and security issues as it tried to play an active role for the solution of the Yugoslavian crises. In the aftermath of the wars it contributed to the establishment of a new regional order by sending soldiers to the peacekeeping missions. When the JDP came to power, it did not just capitalize on the active diplomatic initiatives of the 1990s but also added new elements to it through the increasing interaction with the EU at various levels.”⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Marin Constantin-Alexandru, “Turkish Foreign Policy in the 2000s”, w.date, w.place, Academia.edu, [29.04.2019].

⁴³⁸ Birgül Demirtaş, “Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: A Europeanised Foreign Policy in a De-Europeanised National Context?”, **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**, Vol. 20, No.10 (2015): 7.

This means that in fact there was a reformulation of the principles, tools and above all the vision that JDP foresaw at the beginning of her governance. According to the narrative of the Turkish leadership, priority was given to extending friendships in the Balkans. Many states in the Balkans like Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia etc, share a lot of common values, speaks Turkish and share many traditional customs. As a result of these elements, the leadership of JDP aim to capitalize in this region, pretending a new approach of relations, based on human connections, tradition, history, intensive economic cooperation and joint efforts towards EU integration.

Ahmet Davutoğlu who became a chief foreign policy advisor of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, aimed to reshape the JDP's new foreign policy outlook, thus making Turkey relevant actor in global context.

There is a general opinion that Davutoğlu is the man who changed the rhetoric and practice of functioning of the foreign policy of Turkey, taking action with more dynamic and multidimensional orientation on the international stage. Davutoğlu 's foreign policy imagination was perceived by some researchers as Neo-Ottomanism.⁴³⁹ Especially this was expressed after his speech in Sarajevo in 2009 .

⁴³⁹According to Nora Fisher Onar, “Neo-Ottomanism for the first time came into expression at the beginning of the 1990s by liberal - secular intellectuals in interaction with Turgut Özal. In this period, Neo-Ottomanism promoted and advocated the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi -cultural composition of Ottoman society as well as the tolerance of Ottoman Islam as a key elemnt of diversity and open approach for domestic social, cultural and political life. In so doing, it challenged the unitary plank of national identity, and the concept of secularism of the early republican period of Turkey. In International context, it emphasized historical, kin, language,cultural, and religious ties with newly independent states in Caucasus, Balkans, Black Sea and Central Asia after Cold War. It therefore also challenged the ambivalent, western orientation of foreign policy during the early Republican and Cold War periods”. Nora Fisher Onar, “Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy”, **Edam Discussion Paper Series**, No. 3 (2009):11. In the 21st century, the term has come to signify a domestic trend in Turkish politics by the rise of the ruling Justice and Development Party. It has been also thoughts that that the JDP’s policies, far from being new, were ‘neo-Ottoman’, that aimed a reversion to pre-republican practices. The argument was even more debated by the fact that ‘neo-Ottomanism’ was often promoted as a domestic policy principle of multiculturalism, based on the vision of an Ottoman Empire in which people with different ethnic and religious background supposedly lived in harmony. However, ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ was interpreted differently in the perspective of foreign policy, which was promoted the idea that Turkey should be more active in the former Ottoman space, starting from the Balkans to the Caucasia and Middle East including also North Africa. This was seen as corresponding to Ahmet Davutoglu’s emphasis on Turkey’s role in its geographical neighborhood, most of which had once been part of the Ottoman Empire”. Hale, **Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774**, 254-255.

In fact Davutoğlu said that a new golden period can be achieved with the “revival of Ottoman heritage”.⁴⁴⁰ He and the JDP’s foreign policy experts pretend that, “rather than being peripheral Turkey is a centrally positioned international actor.”⁴⁴¹ For them, Turkey together with the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans are the epicenter of world politics in general and are in the middle of the Rimland belt⁴⁴² cutting across the Mediterranean to the Pacific. Davutoğlu contends that Turkey under no circumstances can be a peripheral country, nor sideline country of the EU, NATO or Asia.⁴⁴³

The concept of Davutoğlu is based on historical and geographical depth which refers that Turkey is unique country because of its geographical location, especially its control over the Bosphorus, and its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴⁴ In historical context Davutoğlu comment that the establishment of Turkey as a state cannot be compared with the national states which were established in the twentieth century. Her position only can be compared to the position of former empires like Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, Japan etc.⁴⁴⁵ The common point of Turkey with these states is that Turkey as these states is established on the basis of their old empires. Davutoğlu claim that geographical depth is part of the historical depth because Turkey's location enables it to be at the same time a state of the Balkans, Caucasus, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Turkey's geographical position does not allow the country to become closed and "imprisoned" inside its borders, but rather obliges the state to develop regional and continental policies.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁰ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Ottoman Heritage and Muslim Communities in the today’s Balkan”, Lecture given in Sarajevo , <http://www.peshkupauje.com/2010/01/trashegimia-otomane-dhe-komunitetet> [28.04.2019].

⁴⁴¹ Joshua W. Walker, Nathalie Tocci, Ronald Linden.“Getting to ZERO Turkey, its Neighbors and the West”, **Transatlantic Academy** (2009): 12.

⁴⁴² According to Nicholas John Spykman, “Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world.” Spykman also says that “Rimland or inner crescent contains most of world's people as well as large share of world's resources. Rimland is in between Heartland and marginal seas, so it was more important than Heartland. It included Asia minor, Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, South East Asia, China, Korea and East Siberia” except Russia”. For more see: John C. Hulsman, “The little-known thinker who holds the key to Cold War II”, <https://capx.co/the-little-known-thinker-who-holds-the-key-to-cold-war-ii/>, [29.04.2019].

⁴⁴³ Walker, Tocci, Ronald Linden.“Getting to ZERO Turkey “, 12.

⁴⁴⁴ Joshua w. Walker, “Learning Strategic Depth: Implications of Turkey’s Foreign Policy Doctrine”, **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2007): 33.

⁴⁴⁵ Ahmet Davutoğlu, **Kriza Globale**, Trs. Ali Pajaziti (Shkup: Logos-A, 2005), 173.

⁴⁴⁶ **Ibid**, 205-206.

Davutoğlu stresses that all states formed on the ruins of empires are faced with this question: What relations should be developed with areas that have previously been peripheral rather than central (empires)? What policies should be developed with their current countries that are different from the past? These questions are raised because successor states of empires will lose their power if they do not develop effective policy towards these areas. In this context he compares Turkey with the example of Russia, claiming that if Russia loses the Caucasus cannot feel safe even in Moscow. Also he hypothetically states that even if Turkey builds walls in relations with the Middle East or the Balkans, it will be still unable to escape from them. He rhetorically asks why the Bosnians appear in Kapikule (borders between Turkey and Bulgaria) and do not go to Austria when they have massive problems. Or why Georgia's problems also concern Turkey? This shows Turkey's strength.⁴⁴⁷ In addition to Turkey's potential that Davutoğlu highlights about helping the people that escaped from the wars, it should also be noted that the reason why Turkey is the first sheltering destination for these peoples is the connection with their relatives who have in Turkey. The second important argument is their visa-free travel to Turkey. This make Turkey the first destination for shelter in a crisis situation. Similar situation we have today with Syrian refugees fleeing from the war in their country and coming in Turkey.⁴⁴⁸

In his narrative Davutoğlu stresses also the aspect of civilization in which Turkey's geographical position makes it the epicenter of the world's most ancient civilizations like the Greek civilization, Egyptian, Mediterranean, Persian and Mesopotamian which helps the growth of the Turkish factor in international relations. Geographical, historical and civilization depth, make Turkey out to be a "central country" in many aspects and it can transform this country into a powerful regional state, and later also as a global actor.⁴⁴⁹ In this line, Davutoğlu further explains why Turkey is perceived as a state of many

⁴⁴⁷ **Ibid**, 207.

⁴⁴⁸ The number of people legally registered for protection status in Turkey, particularly from Syria, stands close to 4 million and a million more are estimated to live off the books. For more see: "Türkiyedeki Suriyeli Sayısı Eylül 2019", **Mülteciler Derneği**, <https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/>; Selim Sazak, "Turkey can't Host Syrian Refugees Forever", **Foreign Policy**, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/27/turkey-cant-host-syrian-refugees-forever-erdogan-assad-idlib-hdp-chp-imamoglu/> [10.09.2019].

⁴⁴⁹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye merkez ülke olmalı", **Radikal**, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=107581> [26.04.2019].

geographies. Viewed from the east, Turkey is an extension of the west, and from west appears as an extension of the east. Watching from the north because of income per capita seem like part of the south, and when we look from the south, it seems to be a country of the north, a member of the OECD, a candidate for EU membership, a member of NATO. He claims that if Turkey could join together the virtue of the east, the rationality of the west, the process of the south in searching for justice, and economic productivity of the north, it could move far ahead.⁴⁵⁰

In the realization of strategic goals within the framework of foreign policy, Davutoğlu proposes a strategy through his concept recommending that “Turkey have to transform herself from being a wing state (of the Cold War) to becoming stronger as a centre / pivotal state in the post-Cold War era”.⁴⁵¹ As a final objective, Davutoğlu emphasize that Turkey has the capacity to be a relevant player of international politics in the future.⁴⁵²

3.1.1. Strategic Depth as a Guiding Principle of Foreign Policy of Justice and Development Party Towards Western Balkan Countries

There is a general consensus that JDP's foreign policy orientation is based on the concept of Ahmet Davutoğlu, formulated in his book “Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position”. In the chapter dealing with the Balkans region, Davutoğlu explains that Turkey is an indivisible part of this region based on both her historical experience as well as her geographic position. Turkey's political, economic and cultural affiliation in the international context will be dependent on the influence and effectiveness that it will have in this region. Davutoğlu further points out that an Anatolian country that has no influence over her immediate regions such as the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East will not be able to maintain her presence in this geopolitical field, nor can it be opened to the world.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Davutoğlu, *Kriza Globale*, 234.

⁴⁵¹ Ahmet Sözen, “A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 11, No.1 (2010): 110.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ Davutoğlu, *Thellësia Strategjike*, 157.

According to the author, determinant factor of Turkey's political influence in the Balkans are peoples that belong to the religious affiliation of Islam as Ottoman remnants. In particular he refers to the Albanian and Bosnian people. Davutoğlu emphasizes that Turkey should focus on the realization of the two main objectives in the short and medium term. The first concerns Bosnia and Albania's empowerment within a stable structure, and the second is securing the Muslim minorities, meaning that Turkey should have the right to intervene in issues related to Muslim minorities in the Balkan region.⁴⁵⁴ Bosnians and Albanians are two ethnic groups that have maintained the elements from the Ottoman heritage within their modern cultural and religious life. Turkey can achieve her objectives in the Balkans by securing their position. The fact that these two communities achieved the objective to strengthen their position as independent nation states represents an opportunity for Turkey also to consolidate her impact in the region. In that context, supporting Muslim communities in the Balkan region is the condition sine qua non for Turkey if she want to achieve her foreign policy goals.⁴⁵⁵

In this line, for Turkey is substantial that Sandžak, Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania, territories with majority Muslim population in the Balkans, stay connected. To secure this connectivity, Davutoğlu proposes that:

“Turkey and the rest of Islamic states need to support the Muslims of this region particularly through economic and infrastructural investments. Stability of the territories with Albanian and Bosnian population should be the main priority for Turkey.”⁴⁵⁶

For Davutoğlu, “Bosnia and Herzegovina represents the political, economic and cultural guardian of Turkey toward Central Europe and Albania plays a key role in Turkey’s policy toward Eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic region.”⁴⁵⁷ In Turkey’s geopolitical context, Albania in the Balkans has the same weight as it has Azerbaijan in the Caucasus.⁴⁵⁸ According to Davutoğlu the geopolitical and geocultural vein of Turkey in the Balkans pass through the route from Central Bosnia over East Bosnia to Sandžak, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Kardžali in Bulgaria and ends in West and East Thrace.

⁴⁵⁴ **Ibid**, 161.

⁴⁵⁵ “Era Davutoğlu dhe Turqia në Ballkan”, **Bota**, <http://www.bota.al/2014/12/era-davutoglu-dhe-turqia-ne-ballkan/>, [25.05.2019].

⁴⁵⁶ Mitrovic, “Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans”, 43.

⁴⁵⁷ **Ibid**.

⁴⁵⁸ **Ibid**.

That is why Turkey needs to secure this route and ensure that it remains unbroken. In case Muslims become physically divided, exist the possibility to be marginalized and with that may be endangered the liquidation of the Ottoman legacy in the Balkan region which automatically will minimize the options for the Turkish influence. In order to preserve the Ottoman legacy as well as to keep Turkey's presence secure in the Balkans, Davutoğlu stress that it must be preserved internal stability of the Muslim communities, be strengthened the economic, political and social ties, and have a uninterrupted communication between them.⁴⁵⁹

The possibility of Turkey in achieving foreign policy goals comes as a result of the most important factor in the new conjuncture, which is the emergence of USA interest in this region. This means that given the Hungarian, Croatian and Slovenian elements tend to pursue a policy possible closer to Germany, Serbian element closer to Russia, while the Bulgarian, Romanian and Greek elements tend to be close with both sides. In this situation the circumstances indicate that Albanian and Bosnian elements tend to be a decisive factor in maintaining the balance of power in this area. At this point, Turkey must achieve her regional objectives that are consistent with those of the USA without falling into conflict with other external factors.⁴⁶⁰ Indeed, the decisive factor in NATO's intervention in BiH and especially in Kosovo was the USA. USA leadership was decisive in military intervention against the Milošević regime, arguing that repression and ethnic cleansing should not be allowed to happen on NATO's doorstep. Meanwhile, Turkey remained in the same line with USA decisions during the period of conflicts in Yugoslavia.

In his narrative Davutoğlu points out the issue of Kosovo as a sensitive implication in the context of security of the region. Kosovar Albanians have close and family relations with Albanians living in Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania. Comparing with Bosnian war that was concentrated mainly in the territory of BiH, the Albanian issue in the Balkans has the potential to have wider spillover effects throughout the Balkan region. It

⁴⁵⁹ Davutoğlu, *Thellësia Strategjike*, 382.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 380.

could very easy spread to Macedonia and to be treated as an Albanian issue.⁴⁶¹ In this perspective, the issue of Macedonia, because her sensible ethnic, cultural and religious background is also important regional issue for Turkey. The fact that there is a great Albanian population in Kosovo as well as in Macedonia can trigger the involvement of Serbia and Greece in the crisis regarding the Albanian question. Since Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia are in one side with different interest to Turkey's in resolving this issue, Turkish leadership should support Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia in requesting their rights and withstand the pressure of the states mentioned above. Davutoğlu says that "possible formation of anti-Turkish regional alliance needs to be prevented."⁴⁶²

Hypothetic creation of alliances between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, can jeopardize seriously the interests of Turkey in the Balkans. These possible alliances can "contribute" to the breaking of Turkey's connection with Bosnia and Albania and cutting of important strategic corridors for Turkey such as the Pan-European Corridor IV which runs between Dresden / Nuremberg in Germany and Thessaloniki (Greece) / Constanța (Romania) with final destination Istanbul (Turkey)⁴⁶³; Pan-European Corridor X runs between Salzburg in Austria and Thessaloniki in Greece to Istanbul (Turkey) and European route E75 that starts at the town of Vardø on the Barents Sea and it runs south through Finland, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, North Macedonia, Greece via Turkey.⁴⁶⁴

In the context of using strategic tools, Davutoğlu proposes that Turkey in the Balkan region should have in mind two instruments, the systemic and the alternative one. According to him, the systemic tool refers to NATO. Active role over the Balkan region

⁴⁶¹ In fact in Macedonia an armed conflict occurred between the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army and the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia at the beginning of February 2001, and ended on 13 August of that same year after the Ohrid Agreement was signed. The reasons behind the conflict were the Albanian requests for more political rights in Macedonia. The USA Department of State reported for some "forms of discrimination against ethnic Albanians existed in Macedonia: Limited access to Albanian-language media and education; Limited representation in public sector jobs; Limited representation in the police corps and in the military officer corps; Denial of citizenship to many long-time ethnic Albanian residents of Macedonia as well as discrimination in the process of citizenship applications; and unfair drawing of voting districts which dilutes their voting strength". "Chronology for Albanians in Macedonia", <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38b7a.html>, 2004, [20.05.2019].

⁴⁶² Davutoğlu, **Thellësia Strategjike**, 384-385.

⁴⁶³ Davutoğlu, **Thellësia Strategjike**, 385.

⁴⁶⁴ "Pan-European Corridors to Major Transport Axes", **UNECE**, https://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5_workshop2.html, [22.02.2019].

and Eastern Europe within NATO, for Turkey this means being powerful in the face of Europe's rejection. The alternative instrument refers to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. At first perception OIC seems to be out of the system, but keeping OIC present in the region holds particular importance in terms of balancing system forces under diplomatic pressure. This implies that Turkey's duty will be debriefing about the Balkan crises within the framework of OIC forum, in order to protect the region's Islamic-Ottoman identity. In a situation where the Pope directly intervenes and expresses views on a particular issue, on the other side there is a lack of initiative to protect the religious / cultural identity that unites Albanians and Bosnians with the geography of Anatolia. In situations where Albanians and Bosnians feel powerless and without external support, there is a risk of losing their cultural identity. In a situation where Bosnia has been able to maintain her existence as a result of contradictions of systemic powers, Davutoğlu emphasizes that in case of Kosovo, both the systemic and alternative elements must be kept constantly on the agenda as global issue within NATO and OIC. The localization and forgetting of the Kosovo issue also means the complete liquidation of the pro-Turkish Albanian element in the area.⁴⁶⁵

Apart of systematic instruments, working on joint projects in the Balkans will be additional asset for greater weight in this region. A concrete example might be the establishment of a similar model like UNESCO in the Balkans, for the protection of the cultural tissue of the area. The biggest damage from eventual cultural liquidation may suffer the Ottoman-Turkish cultural heritage. Another initiative for a joint project might be securing the cultural and educational rights of different ethnic communities in the Balkans. Also a decisive point that would reduce tensions within the Balkan area would be focusing on economic projects.⁴⁶⁶

In his narrative in *Strategic Depth* on Turkey's presence in the Balkans, Davutoğlu also has stances that create space for debate. Among them, the proposition for a formation of an international legal basis that will take under the security framework the ethnic minorities of the Balkan area. Within this legal framework, Turkey should be allowed to intervene in matters concerning Muslim minorities in the Balkans. As a concrete

⁴⁶⁵ Davutoğlu, *The Illusion of Strategic Depth*, 386-387.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 386.

example of the modern era Davutoğlu gives the Cypriot intervention which according to him could be done within such legal framework.⁴⁶⁷

Such proposal in the context of interstate relations is impossible to achieve having in mind the sovereignty and integrity of nation-states to resolve problems within their national legislation without outside interference. And as a second practical argument based on crisis intervention in the Balkans, it was seen that international community led by global superpowers is the only factor that has the potential to take the initiative to intervene and bring the situation under control, as in Bosnia and particularly in Kosovo. Davutoğlu's proposal for having exclusivity to intervene for the purpose of protecting minorities in the Balkans, in current circumstances of 21st-century it seems to be difficult to implement. Taking any individual initiative whether political or military in the region, could damage Turkey's positions, especially in countries that have Slavic orthodox religious backgrounds, based on prejudices about the past of Ottoman Empire.

Davutoğlu's other stance that does not fully correspond to reality is the qualification of Albanians and Bosnians as autocton peoples identified with Ottoman culture.⁴⁶⁸ It cannot be denied the fact that as a result of the presence of Ottoman Empire in the Balkans for over five centuries, Ottoman culture has influenced in the culture of the Balkan people in different segments. First and foremost through the Islam as a religion that is present even today. But these ethnic groups never claimed to identify with Ottoman culture. Both Bosniaks and Albanians see themselves as part of European Western culture and civilization based on their geographical location and their historical trajectory. In this direction, Sulejman Ugljanin, former mayor of Novi Pazar and representative of Bosnians in Sandžak stress that Bosnians are proud of their European origin and culture and Islamic religious affiliation. During the celebration event of Bosnian National Flag Day in Novi Pazar, he emphasize that the lilies on the blue background of the flag symbolise that we are a European, autocton people in Sandžak, and the three crescents indicate our Islamic background.⁴⁶⁹ While on the other side, Enis

⁴⁶⁷ **Ibid**, 161.

⁴⁶⁸ **Ibid**, 380.

⁴⁶⁹ “Ugljanin: Bošnjaci Ponosni na Evropsko porijeklo i Vjersku Pripadnost”, **Kosova për Sanxhakun**, <http://kosovapersanxhakun.org/?p=1900&lang=bs>, [20.10.2019].

Sulstarova Tirana-based sociologist, stresses that the part of the Albanian people with nationalist backgrounds even today “blame the legacy of Ottoman Empire as responsible for almost every economic, cultural or political issue that the Albania encounters”. “Some say that if we were not invaded by the Ottomans (referred to simply as Turks in Albania), we would be a developed western nation today”.⁴⁷⁰ The general approach of these peoples living in the Balkans regarding their cultural identification is centred to Europe, without denying the influence of Ottoman culture that has been present for more than five centuries.

3.1.2. Post-2002 Five Principles and Vision of Turkish Foreign Policy under Justice and Development Party

After the stances revealed in the book Strategic Depth regarding Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans, Ahmet Davutoğlu in 2008 has published an essay outlining the 5 basic principles that Turkey must pursue in order to have a successful foreign policy. Principles are the framework and the guidelines of the implementations of the policies. In this regards Davutoğlu presents a set of foreign policy principles through a new policy orientation.⁴⁷¹

The first pillar is the balance between freedom and security, or in other words, the promotion of the fundamental human rights and liberties that is concurrent with providing full security of the citizens. Turkey can achieve progress only if she can be able to establish a peaceful and coherent domestic order on which can build a proactive foreign policy. Since 2002, Turkey is continuing to keep the position of promoting civil liberties without minimizing the security.

In 2007 despite serious challenges with terror in the border close to Iraq for several weeks, Turkey protected civil liberties without having consequences in other cities like İstanbul, Ankara or Van. Normal life continued, even while Turkey was faced with terror. Davutoğlu says that, “This successful balance is a matter of political culture and

⁴⁷⁰ Gjergj Erebara, “Albanians Question ‘Negative’ view of Ottomans”, **Birn**, 15.12.2010, <http://fellowship.birn.eu.com/en/alumni-initiative/alumni-initiative-articles-albanians-questions-negative-view-of-ottomans>, [20.10.2019].

⁴⁷¹ Gülbahar Yelken Aktaş, “Turkish Foreign Policy: New Concepts and Reflections”, (Master thesis, Middle East Technical University Graduate School for Social Sciences, 2010), 58.

prudence". During this period elections were held in normal conditions without declaring state of emergency, and the results did not influenced the process in a negative context. Despite concerns and dilemmas in early 2007, this experience proved that balance between democracy and security is settled in Turkey.⁴⁷² Actually this principle is the continuity of the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk principle of, "peace at home, peace in the world" and the need to have internal state prosperity and stability in order to have open the path to peaceful relations with the outside world.

Turkey's relations with her neighbors time to time have been turbulent, until it came to expression a coherent foreign policy strategy that Ankara put into action.⁴⁷³ Davutoğlu's second principle of zero problems with neighbors, considered to be fundamental change of the perception that four sides of Turkey are surrounded by enemies.⁴⁷⁴ Turkey's opening in the regional context initially dependent from the relations with her neighbors which are main points of the ground connection with more remote regions. It is unthinkable for a country that experience frequent crises with her neighbors to achieve regional and global foreign policy objectives. For example, it is impossible for Turkey to implement a successful policy in the Balkans if there is a constant crisis with both Bulgaria and Greece. These two countries are the crossing points for Turkey both in the Balkans and in Europe. The same goes for the Caucasus region. The tense relations with Georgia, Armenia and Iran also can obstruct a Caucasian policy. According to Davutoğlu, alliances away from your borders have weight as far as you have effective and fair relations with your border neighbors. Turkey's strategic relations with Bosnia and Albania can have her effectiveness, when Bulgaria and Greece don't create a counter block toward Turkey.⁴⁷⁵ Turkey's foreign policy approach under this principle has two other segments. Firstly, Turkey aims the normalization of foreign relations particularly

⁴⁷² Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision", 80.

⁴⁷³ Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy", 115.

⁴⁷⁴ Muhamed Ali , "Impaktet e Doktrinës së Thellësisë Strategjike në Politikën e Turqisë ndaj Lindjes së Mesme", (Master thesis, South East European University Faculty of Public Administration and Political Science, 2009), 58.

⁴⁷⁵ Davutoğlu, **Thellësia Strategjike**, 185.

with her neighbors and close regions and secondly it foreseen constructive initiatives based upon political, economic and socio cultural relations in the region.⁴⁷⁶

To a certain extent, the base of the principle "zero problems with neighbors" was already practiced by Ismail Cem during his term as a foreign minister between 1997-2002.⁴⁷⁷ In the period when Ismail Cem's was foreign minister, the prime objective of Turkey's foreign policy was the development of diplomatic, economic, cultural and social relations with her close neighbor states and to be able to resolve the open issues particularly with Greece and Syria. In the case of Greece through the use of public diplomacy, Turkish Foreign Minister aimed to change the negative perceptions about Greece in Turkey. Cem preferred to use media and NGOs (particularly during the earthquake diplomacy) as a tool, aiming to change the hostile perception between Turkish and Greek people.⁴⁷⁸

According to third principle, Turkey should develop more active role in her close regions. Turkey's regional influence stretch from the Balkans to Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. The positive feedback to Turkey's active involvement in complicated regional political developments, offering international development assistance, peace-making and mediation, might be the indicator of aptness of this policy. Turkey contributed to the normalization of the situation in these countries through NATO, UN or the EU, which is an indicator of its active presence in the region. In Caucasia, Turkey also enjoys close relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Middle East is the region where Turkey is facing with limited possibilities in extension of influence. The PKK issue, and the existence of prejudices on both sides, represents a difficulty in the form of a reciprocal psychological barrier. But according to Davutoglu JDP until 2008 actively was worked to overcome these barriers.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Ulutaş, "Turkish Foreign Policy in 2009", 1.

⁴⁷⁷ Yigal Schleifer "Ahmet Davutoglu: A Thinker in the Halls of Power", **World Politics Review**, 02.02.2010, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/5051/ahmet-davutoglu-a-thinker-in-the-halls-of-power>, [10.09.2019].

⁴⁷⁸ Ozan Örmeci, "Ismail Cem's Foreign Policy (1997-2002)", **SDU Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Social Sciences**, No. 23 (2011): 241.

⁴⁷⁹ Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision", 81.

The fourth principle is adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy. This approach take into consideration the integration in the European Union, good relations with Russia, and Turkey's active policy in Eurasia as part of a stable policy that serves to supplement each other. This approach aims to explain that relations with Russia are not alternative option vis a vis the EU, or the partnership with the USA it's not partnership against Russia.⁴⁸⁰ It should be emphasized that this principle came to expression as a result of dynamic changes in the post-Cold War era where the international system became more dynamic. After the end of bi-polar era, “Turkey entered into diplomatic, economic, social and cultural relations with the newly independent states of Central Asia, Balkans and Caucasus”.⁴⁸¹ One dimensional foreign policy wasn't functional anymore because the new circumstances pushed the states in exploiting new opportunities in this regions. Additionally Turkish foreign policy started to have beneficiaries with the inclusion of other actors such as influential Turkish individuals and NGOs in foreign affairs. The examples of TUSIAD-in (Association of industry and businessmen of Turkey), IKV (Economic Development Foundation) and TOBB (Union of Chambers and Exchanges of Turkey) have played an important role influencing in negotiations of Turkey with the European Union. Different educational institutions from Turkey entered into collaboration and joint projects with educational institutions around Europe and other continents. To summarize, they have become non-formal “ambassadors” of Turkey in this period. Their impact on different tracks can be defined as complimentary foreign policy.⁴⁸²

The fifth principle in this framework is rhythmic diplomacy. This principle means that Turkey need to have more active role in international relations or more exactly it means active participation in all international organizations and in all issues of regional and global relevance. In this context Davutoğlu says that:

“Turkey has an observer status in African Union, a natural result of Turkey’s opening to Africa in 2005. Turkey is a member country of G-20, has a strategic dialogue mechanism with the Gulf Cooperation Council, and actively participates in the Arab League. Turkey also is signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. All these activism show a new approach of Turkey that is based on vision, soft

⁴⁸⁰ **Ibid**, 82.

⁴⁸¹ Sözen, “A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy”, 117

⁴⁸² **Ibid**.

power, universal language, and implementation of consistent foreign policies in different parts of the world.”⁴⁸³

- **Justice and Development Party’s “Vision 2023”**

In addition to the principles that are considered to be the main driver of Turkey's foreign policy development, the masterminds of the JDP also formulate the so-called vision 2023 at the first stage of their governance. JDP's foreign policy vision in the background has the domestic transformation, particularly the consolidation of political and economic stability in the country. Turkey's internal reforms and growing economic capabilities gave the country the credit to emerge as a peace-promoter in her close regions and beyond.⁴⁸⁴ The vision of JDP is named as "Vision 2023" when Turkey will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its founding as a republic.

In the implementation of the new vision, Davutoğlu says that:

“There is a need to integrate Turkey's foreign-policy approach into its national one. Any possible contradiction or contrast between these two, will make difficult to pursue an active, responsible, and successful foreign policy. Turkey's ambition is to deepen and strengthen her democracy, relations between Turkish society and Turkey's governing institutions and to show to the world the potential of her own domestic balance. There is a continuous need to integrate domestic political accomplishments into the vision of foreign policy and to inject foreign-policy activism and self-confidence back into the domestic political scene”.⁴⁸⁵

The key objectives of Turkish foreign policy “ Vision 2023” can be listed as follows:

- Firstly, the intention to meet the conditions of EU membership in 2023 and become an influential member state in the EU.
- Secondly, Turkey continuously will work for regional integration, in the context of security and economic collaboration.
- Thirdly, Turkey will try to play an important role in resolving conflicts in the region.
- Fourth, Turkey will participate strongly in the global arena.

⁴⁸³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero Problems Foreign Policies”, **Foreign Policy**, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/20/turkeys-zero-problems-foreign-policy> [06.10.2019].

⁴⁸⁴ Bülent Aras, “Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy”, **SETA Policy Brief**, No. 32 (2009): 4.

⁴⁸⁵ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero Problems Foreign Policies”.

- Fifthly, Turkey will play a crucial role in international organizations and will become one of the ten most powerful economies in the world.⁴⁸⁶

Davutoğlu says that:

“These objectives aim to create a powerful and respectable Turkey that will have capacities to make significant contributions to the international community. To reach this objectives, Turkey have to make progress in every possible segment, show an interest in every issue which is related to the global stability and trying to contribute accordingly. This collective effort will make Turkey a relevant player of the international sysstem within XXI century.”⁴⁸⁷

3.1.2.1. Methodology and Principles of Foreign Policy of Justice and Development Party Towards Western Balkans

To complete the theoretical framework of JDP's foreign policy, also it will be included the section dealing with the Western Balkans. Namely, after elaborating the general principles of Turkey's foreign policy published in an essay in 2008, Davutoğlu later, respectively in 2011, at the Center for Strategic Research published a new essay exclusively elaborating the vision and principles to be followed in the Balkan region, in order to have a more prosperous Balkans, including Turkey.

For Turkey, the Balkan region is very important area because it is an open door to Europe. This door should remain open always.⁴⁸⁸ Regarding the relations of Turkey with Western Balkan countries Davutoğlu suggests that:

“There is a opportunity for restoration of the common points as economic, cultural and political; cooperation in a sense of developing a spirit of joint action, as well as the building in a sense of dropping the not-so-glorious past decades and to answer the new challenges of the future decades.”⁴⁸⁹

According to Davutoğlu the new approach should be based on 3 methodology principles and 4 policy principles which will help on formulation of regional cooperation. The first methodology principle emphasize a vision-oriented approach rather than crisis-oriented one. Davutoğlu emphasize that:

⁴⁸⁶ **Ibid.**

⁴⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

⁴⁸⁸ Baskın Oran, “Türk Dış Politikasının Teori ve Pratiği”, **Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar-Cilt 1(1919-1980)**, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2009): 26.

⁴⁸⁹ Davutoğlu, “ Nje Vizion Drejt te Ardhmes ”, 5.

“The leaders and peoples of the Balkan region still recall the crises, among others, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. A crisis-oriented approach remains fixated on the details of these past crises and as such, purposely or not, constantly reproduce the negative legacy of this bitter episode. A vision-oriented approach, in contrast, seeks to move beyond these crises and proposes to handle today's issues with a new framework and a fresh vision.”⁴⁹⁰

The second methodology principle propose a forward-looking rather than a backward-looking approach. This means that Balkan states needs to look more to the future rather than to be concentrated to the past when we refer to the contemporary issues. In the third methodology principle, Davutoğlu suggests a value-based approach rather than an ideology-based approach to regional problems. He says that:

“A value-based vision presumes that Balkan nations agree on certain common values, regardless of ethnic, religious, or sectarian differences. This vision stands in contrast to the ideology-based approach that was a reference of the Cold War period or the later ethno-nationalistic ideologies that have destroyed the region and causing a spillover effect on the neighboring areas.”⁴⁹¹

In order that methodology principles be efficient in practical terms, it should be complemented by policy principles. The first policy principle is regional ownership and inclusiveness. Initial point of this principle is that this place pertain to the natives who have lived here for many time and also will live in the future. The people of the Balkans are not just neighbors living near to each other, but they also in symolic context are one family with social and cultural relations that connect to each other. Applying this principle does not mean that there will never have any disagreements or division in some issues, but a family approach basically means that the states of the Balkans have to manage the crises with the “spirit of a family”. Davutoğlu suggest that Balkan countries together with Turkey have to work in developing more regional initiatives to increase collaboration and to find ways and formulas to solve the problems.⁴⁹²

The second policy principle is regional reintegration. Davutoğlu says that:

“The 20th century was a century of divisions. In order to normalize and stabilize the Balkans, decision makers must work in turning the 21st century into a century of reintegration in the

⁴⁹⁰ **Ibid.**

⁴⁹¹ **Ibid**, 5-6.

⁴⁹² **Ibid**, 7

Balkan region. Instead of micro-level division, there is a need for macro-level integration. In this context the political dialogue is the focal point of this principle.”⁴⁹³

The idea to establish bilateral and multilateral high-level political dialogue mechanisms which is comparable to the model of EU it can be a good starting point. A concrete example can be the Turkey-Greece High Level Strategic Council Meeting. Through this high level strategic council, in one day (May 15, 2010), the governments representatives of Turkey and Greece signed 25 agreements and there was a government meeting with the ministers of the two states. Additionally a good example to regional integration requires to be focused more at the role and importance of the cities in the region. In Davutoğlu's words:

“A good number of cities have suffered from the imposed splits in the region throughout the course of history. For example, Thessaloniki in the past, particularly during the Ottoman Empire was the epicenter of the trade activity in Eastern Europe, serving as the gateway to Eastern Europe throughout the centuries and today is just an important city in Greece.”⁴⁹⁴

These cities could thrive again if all states of the region give priority to the economic re-integration and take away obstacles to closer inter-connection. Reaching an economic re-integration is a sine qua non necessity for having airline connections, highways, and high-speed trains where the people of this region can be easier connected and travel faster. Another fields where reintegration is a must is in cultural and intellectual interaction. More frequent cultural and intellectual interaction through exchange programs between educational and research institutions is a essential for any regional cooperation process.⁴⁹⁵

The focus of third policy principle is in the European integration process. It is up to the decision makers of the the Balkans to make this region a epicenter of the trade interaction that will attract attention also to the EU. This region have potential to be also model of cultural co-existence for the Europeans regarding the the issue of multiculturalism. Davutoğlu says that, “The Balkan region can offer many useful

⁴⁹³ **Ibid**, 8.

⁴⁹⁴ **Ibid**, 8

⁴⁹⁵ **Ibid**.

practical lessons and has a very good potential to contribute to the shaping of the European cultural sphere.”⁴⁹⁶

The fourth policy principle suggests the development of a one common position in regional and global organizations. Davutoğlu says that in the UN there is no intra-Balkan consultation mechanisms; this must be taken into account and addressed accordingly. On some topics there is opportunity to promote an intra-Balkan dialogue, that can make it easier to create joint stances. Also in NATO such kind of mechanisms can be very productive. In NATO, for instance Davutoğlu says that:

“Member countries should spend more effort thinking about questions such as this: how can the Balkan countries come together in NATO to discuss and promote the membership of other Balkan countries? The granting of Membership Action Plan (MAP) status for Bosnia-Herzegovina can be taken as a good example that all NATO members coming from Balkans supported this initiative.”⁴⁹⁷

Another important topic is the representation of the region in the global economic and financial institutions. Davutoğlu emphasize that:

“Turkey is the only Balkan country which is in the G-20 and can represent the interests of the Balkan region in this platform. A new concept of consultation, cooperation and development of common actions in these platformsit can have affirmative impact in the regional cooperation between Balkan states.”⁴⁹⁸

If we summarize we can see that new concept is centered on the following issues: Turkey's leading role in the Balkans, liberal elements as economic interdependence, conflict resolution and mediation processes, soft power usage, promotion of "win-win" strategy, development of a proactive diplomacy commensurate to the country historic and geographic depth and minimizing the prominent militaristic image of Turkey. Trying to implement these concepts, JDP want to take the foreign policy approach of Turkey to another stage, with pretension to be influential actor from this point of view.⁴⁹⁹

Comparing with the thoughts of 2001 written in Strategic Depth, in this new framework, consisted by several principles, Davutoğlu gives a new approach. Instead talking about

⁴⁹⁶ **Ibid**, 9.

⁴⁹⁷ **Ibid**, 10.

⁴⁹⁸ **Ibid**, 10.

⁴⁹⁹ Constantin-Alexandru, “Turkish Foreign Policy in the 2000s”, 5.

who can be the main allies of Turkey in the Balkans here Davutoğlu talks about concepts like regional ownership and inclusiveness, regional reintegration, developing common position in regional and global organizations with all Balkan states and so on. In a word, while Davutoğlu's initial position was that Turkey should base its foreign policy on the Balkans in its two natural allies, Bosnia and Albania, in 2011 at least in a theoretical framework this attitude has changed markedly. This implies that Turkey seeks inclusion, seeks to develop relations with other nations, with particular emphasis on Serbia, as the largest state in the Western Balkans. This course can be seen in the elaboration of Turkey's policies in the Balkan region in the following section.

3.1.3. Euro-Atlantic Perspective as a Common Goal of Turkey and the Western Balkan countries

The 2000s for Turkey were determinant for strengthening relations with the Western Balkan states. While the 1990's had marked an agenda based on the strengthening of peace, security and political stability in the Balkan peninsula, in the new millennium, Turkey under the leadership of JDP gave priority to the recovery of historical and cultural ties and emphasized the need for the increasing of economic relations. JDP focused on giving opportunity to the intensification of all kinds of initiatives and projects through the bilateral and multilateral agreements in the context of direct investment, development aid, commercial etc.⁵⁰⁰

However, It should be mentioned that foreign policy the JDP in the early stages of governance had the same approach as the governments of the 1990s. This means that Turkey's Western Balkan policy was in the same line with that of western international community, especially with the USA. This approach also continued after 2002. During the wars in BiH and Kosovo, Ankara coordinated its policies closely with the USA and it was highly interested in having an active role in stabilising the region. At various

⁵⁰⁰ Martín Madridejos, "Turquía en los Balcanes Occidentales: del Imperio Otomano a Erdogan", **Menanalysis**, <http://www.menanalysis.com/turquia-en-los-balcanes-occidentales-del-imperio-otomano-a-erdogan/>, [25.10.2019].

phases before and after 2002, Turkey advocated for Western Balkans integration in Euro-Atlantic structures.⁵⁰¹

As one of the oldest members and among the most consolidated armies within NATO alliance, Turkey has been the strongest promoter and lobbyist in integrating the Western Balkan countries into NATO. Regarding Turkey's support and lobbying for the integration of the Western Balkan countries, during the interview with former Macedonian Foreign Minister Antonio Milošoski, he shared a personal experience from the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008. Milošoski pointed out that:

“There was strong lobbying regarding Macedonia's integration into NATO. Before the NATO summit in Bucharest (2008), Turkey shared information on what could be a problem or an obstacle to joining to the Alliance. We normally knew and located that, it was not difficult to locate that the problem is the attitude of official Athens. But apart of this, the information we received before the NATO summit in Bucharest from Ankara and Washington was that in addition to USA, Germany, Turkey, Britain, we have to work as much as possible with France. So they already had some information that Greece is not alone in its position of blocking Macedonia's membership in NATO, but that the then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, because of the traditionally common interests with Greece, at the summit in Bucharest after the objection, or more exactly after the veto of Kostas Karamanlis, Sarkozy supported the Greek Prime Minister. We were told that if Greece were alone in its decision to block, then perhaps the veto had a chance of failing, because the pressure would be very great from all countries. But, when a member state like France, which is also a permanent member of the UN Security Council joins or shows solidarity with that position, then it is much more difficult. What was important to us was that we were on time informed by Turkey and USA that apart from Greece, France also had a slightly strange position. After the national disappointment that occurred to many of the citizens of Macedonia who naturally and justifiably expected an invitation to NATO, within the state leadership we discussed and tried to arrange at least strategic partnership agreements with USA and Turkey. And in May 2008, we signed strategic agreement with Condoleezza Rice in Washington, and with Ali Babacan on November 10-12, 2008 in Ankara. These strategic agreements, although not a compensation for membership, still were a "tool", or a link with two strong NATO members, such as Turkey and America, where Macedonia would like to belong. So this was a signal from us that we want to continue the path toward NATO, and this was accepted positively by USA and Turkey.”⁵⁰²

In addition to lobbying for the membership of new member states in the alliance, it should be noted that Turkey is among the top countries that contribute with military personnel to NATO. According to Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence (between 1985-2008), Turkey, as of 2008 was the first among NATO member European countries and the second after the USA regarding the number of personnel of the Armed forces within the alliance. Turkey's active approach through lobbying for new

⁵⁰¹ Asli Aydıntaşbaş, “From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey’s Role in the Western Balkans”, **Policy brief of European Council on Foreign Relations**, (March 2019): 8.

⁵⁰² “Interview with Antonio Milošoski”, 29.11.2019.

enlargements of the alliance, participation in military missions and large military presence in NATO, perhaps represents the most powerful tool of Turkey for identification with the Western bloc.⁵⁰³

Taking into consideration this evidence, Turkey has the full legitimacy of imposing itself on one of the key actors of the alliance. Regarding the enlargement of NATO with new members, Turkey's approach always has been open toward this policy and consistently supported it. Is worth noting that certain moments Turkey indirectly tried to use her NATO membership as a tool in order to open the doors for EU integration. Before the NATO summit in Madrid in 1997 when the alliance made the first invitation toward the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, Turkish Foreign Minister of the time Tansu Çiller stated to the BBC that in principle Turkey is not opposed to NATO's enlargement, but according to the NATO documents and particularly according to decisions taken in October 1995 within the alliance, the process of enlargement in both the EU and NATO should happen parallelly. Çiller states that in this regard Turkey wants this process to take place on the basis of principles.⁵⁰⁴

After Çiller's statement, the first perception from the member states of NATO and EU was that Turkey is preparing to use the veto as an instrument in order to "push" EU to make more concessions regarding the membership of Turkey. But, except the statement, politically, Turkey did nothing else to affirm Çiller's stance. Turkey's attempt to make the process of enlargement in the EU and NATO parallelly remained only in the framework of the foreign minister's statement. On the contrary, Turkey openly supported all future NATO enlargements after the Cold War, while on the other hand it has not become member of the European Union.⁵⁰⁵ Pursuing the policy of "open door" for NATO enlargement, didn't damage Turkey's foreign policy interests. On the contrary, the Western Balkan countries had the highest expectations for support from Turkey during the process of integration into the NATO. During the further elaboration of the

⁵⁰³ Arif Bağbaşıoğlu, "NATO'nun Genişlemesi ve Balkanlar", (PhD thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2011), 205.

⁵⁰⁴ İbrahim Gündüz, "Çiller: Bize Büyük Haksızlık Ediliyor", *Sabah*, 19.02.1997, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1997/02/19/f01.html>, [01.11.2019].

⁵⁰⁵ Arif Bağbaşıoğlu, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası NATO Politikaları ve Türkiye'nin Rolü", *Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası Yeni Eğilimleri Yeni Yaklaşımları Yeni Yönelimleri*, ed. Idris Demir (Bursa:Dora, 2014): 166-167.

thesis, we will see that Turkey was the most powerful advocate which supported the integration of countries such as Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania into NATO.

While for Turkey NATO is an instrument of influence and a tool of identification with the Western bloc, the situation in the European Union is different. Although it has been one of the oldest candidates⁵⁰⁶ aiming to integrate into the organization, her objective has not yet been met. The greater will and intensity towards achieving this strategic objective is considered to be in the early years of the JDP's rule, and not coincidentally in academic circles this period is termed as the Europeanization of Turkey's Foreign Policy.

In one of the speeches in his first term as Prime Minister, Erdoğan said that:

“We do not want EU because it is the fashion of the moment. We want to bring into force the global values behind the European identity. These global values cohere with contemporary admission norms promoted by the EU. Turkey will provide harmony between her own values and contemporary ideals and will show its persistence and potential.”⁵⁰⁷

This implies that the strategic objective of JDP's was democratization as a global value and it could be facilitated through becoming EU member. Accordingly, the JDP was focused on the EU reform process which had already been on the framework of Turkish leadership since the Helsinki Summit in 1999.⁵⁰⁸

The period from the summer of 2002 until October 2005 was marked by the passage of a series of reform packages, marking the formal opening of accession negotiations with the EU. In spite of initial dilemmas of many regarding JDP's Islamist origins, this party

⁵⁰⁶ The first contacts between Turkey and EU can be find in the Agreement between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community known as the Ankara Agreement which was signed on September 12, 1963. Ankara agreement provided framework for co-operation between Turkey and the European Economic Community. The agreement was planned to be implemented in a three-step process in order to create customs union to help providing the Turkey's integration in the EEC. For more see: “Türkiye ile Avrupa Ekonomik Topluluğu Arasında bir Ortaklık Yaratan Anlaşma (Ankara Anlaşması) - 12 Eylül 1963”, **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı**, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-ile-avrupa-ekonomik-toplulugu-arasinda-bir-ortaklik-yaratan-anlasma-_ankara-anlasmasi_-12-eylul-1963-.tr.mfa, [04.11.2019].

⁵⁰⁷ Öznür Akçalı, “Using “The Other” in Foreign Policy Making: An Analysis of Turkey - EU Relations Between 2002 and 2014”, (Unpublished Master thesis, Middle East Technical University Graduate School for Social Sciences, 2015), 36.

⁵⁰⁸ Ali Aslan, “Turkish “Foreign Policy” Towards the European Union Under AK Party Rule: From “Europeanization” to the “Alliance of Civilizations” “, **Birey ve Toplum**, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2012): 40.

in the first period of the governance proved to be a political party with reformist orientation. This period of JDP's governance was highlighted with vigorous commitment to the implementation of the Copenhagen criteria. All reforms in the political and economic fields were noticed by the EU officials and in December 2004 at the Brussels summit, the European Council decided to open the negotiation process without delay. Even the most optimistic wouldn't have predicted in 1999, when Turkey was granted EU candidate status that negotiations would be opened with the EU just five years later. The Brussels decision of 2004 to open the negotiation process clearly highlighted the pace of transformation and reform that Turkey had experienced during this period.⁵⁰⁹ Negotiations for full membership of Turkey in EU were started on 3 October 2005. According to Çiğdem Nas and Yonca Özer, "The EU's political conditionality has played a crucial role in this transformation". In a word, the need to fulfill the "Copenhagen political criteria in order to start the accession negotiations, was central to the reform packages that were adopted".⁵¹⁰

But soon this optimism began to fade away as the accession negotiations have reached a stalemate since 2006. Out of the 35 chapters for Turkish accession in the EU just the chapter 25 pertaining to Science and Research has been closed since 2005, and eight chapters were frozen by the EU in 2006,⁵¹¹ because of the non-implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement to Cyprus by Turkish side. EU officials stated that no other chapter would not be closed until Turkey fulfills its obligation regarding the Additional Protocol. In 2007, an additional five chapters were blocked by a French veto, arguing that those chapters were related with full membership to the EU. In fact, France, led by its President Nicolas Sarkozy, went one step further by

⁵⁰⁹ Ziya Oniş, "The New Wave of Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey: Drifting Away from Europeanization?", **Danish Institute for International Studies Policy Paper** (2009): 23.

⁵¹⁰ Çiğdem Nas, Yonca Özer, **Turkey and EU Integration: Achievements and Obstacles** (Routledge: London, New York, 2017), 90.

⁵¹¹ On 29 November 2006, the EU Commission proposed the partial suspension of negotiations, because Turkish leadership didn't apply the Ankara Agreement that has to do with opening of its ports and airports to trade from Cyprus. One month later, on 11 December 2006, EU foreign ministers accepted Commission recommendation to sanction Turkey and suspend talks on eight chapter from the thirty five. The eight chapters were "Free Movement of Goods, Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Financial Services, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries, Transport Policy, Customs Union and External Relations". For more see: "Turkey accession and Cyprus", **EURACTIV**, 06.11.2007, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/linksdossier/turkey-accession-and-cyprus/>, [29.10.2019].

emphasizing that, “Turkey, with its 75 million people and a growing economy, does not belong to Europe”. According to French President Sarkozy, the only connection that can be made between Turkey and the EU is through a special partnership.⁵¹² This view shared also by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. But this offer has been categorically rejected by the Turkish leadership.⁵¹³ Cyprus was another country that vetoed six additional chapters. Regarding this situation, one Turkish MP expressed frustration saying that: “Even the chapter regarding energy is frozen despite the fact that Turkey plays a very central role in the European energy security sector.”⁵¹⁴ This situation created a serious problem for the JDP government in the following period. Upon Turkey's resistance to recognize the sovereignty of the Greek Cypriot state the EU decided to reduce the speed of accession negotiations with Turkey.

During the 2000s the countries of the Western Balkans had the same enthusiasm as Turkey towards EU integration. The first contacts of these countries date back to the early 1990s by appointing representatives to Brussels and establishing diplomatic relations. However, the first concrete action in relation EU-Western Balkan relations were made in 1999 through the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), a framework for relations between the EU and the Western Balkan countries.⁵¹⁵ The EU proposed the process of Stabilization and Association Agreements to offer the "way to Europe" for every Balkan country; Opportunities for official links with the EU through these agreements; It included EU economic and financial assistance and cooperation with it; Political dialogue in trade; Establishment a free trade zone; Cooperation in the field of justice and internal affairs. So, the Stabilization and Association Agreements was designed in such a way that could be adapted to the specific situations of each

⁵¹² Çiğdem Nas, "Changing Dynamics of Turkish Foreign Policy and the European Union", **Turkish Policy Quarterly**, Vol.9, No. 4 (2010): 124.

⁵¹³ Martin Kuebler, "Turkey not fit for EU accession: Sarkozy", **Deutsche Welle**, 26.02.2011, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-not-fit-for-eu-accession-sarkozy/a-14875593>, [16.05.2021].

⁵¹⁴ Oya Dursun Özkanca, "Turkey and the European Union in the Balkans: Strategic Partners or Competitors?", **Journal of Regional Security**, Vol. 11, No.1 (2016): 41.

⁵¹⁵ "The Western Balkans", **European Parliament**, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/168/the-western-balkans>, [29.10.2019]

country, giving to the states the opportunity to move in its own way toward integration.⁵¹⁶

Three years later during the meeting of the EU Council in Copenhagen (2002), the Western Balkan countries were confirmed as a potential candidates that EU would support their efforts to be closer to the EU. The EU representatives additionally stressed that implementation of the Dayton and Ohrid Agreements are determinant elements in the EU's policy.⁵¹⁷ In the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, EU confirmed once again that the future and perspective of the Balkans lies in joining the EU. The Stabilization and Association Process has remained the guideline for the European course for Western Balkan countries. During the summit it was emphasized that progress of each state will depended on its own merits which refers to the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria and the requirements set in the SAP. In the summit it was also said that Albania, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Slovenia belongs to the "European Family". This summit was determinant to made it clear to these states that the EU's doors are open, but in the meantime it was also emphasized that the duration for membership in EU depends from the capacity of the states in the implementation of the reforms in areas where the EU requires.⁵¹⁸ But in the 2000s more exactly in 2004 the countries that managed to integrate into the EU were from the fifth enlargement, (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta, Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus) and in 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria) and from the sixth enlargement in 2013 was Croatia. Other countries of the Western Balkans such as Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, despite the claims to be part of the European family are still in the process of meeting the conditions that the EU requires from these countries.

⁵¹⁶ Blerim Reka, Arta Ibrahim, **Studime Evropiane** (Tetovë: South East European University, 2004), 240-241.

⁵¹⁷ "Copenhagen European Council, 12 and 13 December 2002- Presidency Conclusions", **Council of the European Union**, 29 January 2003, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20906/73842.pdf>, [01.11.2019].

⁵¹⁸ Eroglu, "Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Balkans", 71; "Eu-Western Balkans Summit Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003", **European Commission**, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_03_163, [02.11.2019].

It can be noticed that interest and motivation for European Union integration from both, Turkey and the Western Balkan countries gained momentum in the early 2000s. But it should be emphasized that Turkish diplomacy in this period mostly was focused in the region of the Middle East. Apparently, the Balkan region wasn't a top priority for Turkey. But the process of EU integration made it clear to Ankara that intensification of relations with Western Balkans was necessary in order to articulate a strategy for the possible integration in the EU. For this reason the most pragmatic approach was to be in coordination with the Western Balkan countries who also hope someday to be part of "EU club".⁵¹⁹

For Turkey it was clear that fulfilling only the Copenhagen criteria would not be enough to be part of EU. An additional strategy was needed that would put pressure on EU officials to accept Turkey as a new member. The strategy was to apply the formula: "all or none". That is: If the Balkan states would be admitted to the EU, Turkey must be admitted as well. If Turkey did not enter, neither would the Balkan states integrate into the EU.⁵²⁰ Imposing this strategy would probably be one of the last attempts for EU integration, given the 5th enlargement in 2004 and 2007 that incorporated Central European countries and Turkey was not foreseen in this enlargement, the Balkan region remained the last train where Turkey hoped to be in it. However, even this effort failed to achieve any concrete result because Croatia as a member of the Western Balkans was integrated into the union in 2013, while the European Union later launched other initiatives such as Berlin Process⁵²¹ regarding the accession of the Balkan countries to the EU, in which Turkey was not part of this package.

Despite the failure to meet the main objective of EU integration, even going with the "strategy" or all or none in the EU referring to Turkey's integration in the same package

⁵¹⁹ Francisco Veiga, "De la Clandestinidad a la Profundidad Estratégica.* La Nueva Política Exterior Turca en los Balcanes, 1990-2010", **Balkanica**, No. 1 (2010): 19.

⁵²⁰ **Ibid.**

⁵²¹ "The Berlin Process is an diplomatic initiative aiming to boost regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries and their European integration. It started with the 2014 Conference of Western Balkan States in Berlin, followed by the 2015 Vienna Summit, 2016 Paris Summit, 2017 Trieste Summit, 2018 London Summit and the last summit was organized in Poznan in 2019. The Berlin Process was initiated aiming to consolidate and keep the dynamics in EU integration process after 5-year stoppage of expansion announced by Commission President Jean Claude Juncker". For more see: "The Berlin Process Information and Resource Centre, **The Berlin Process**, <https://berlinprocess.info/>; <http://shtetiweb.org/berlin-process/>, [02.11.2019].

with the Balkan states, the JDP government boosted the intensity of relations with these countries. The presence at the multilateral and bilateral meetings of Turkish leadership was evidence of this approach. In fact, this was also a reflection of the Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy by establishing relations through the intensification in cooperation in various areas of mutual interest with the Western Balkan countries. In addition Turkey still continued to follow policies of international western community regarding crucial topics related to the Western Balkans. Concrete examples can be mentioned the recognition of the independence of Montenegro and later Kosovo.

Regarding the official visits in the region, it should be noted that one of the first visits to the Balkans by Prime Minister Erdoğan was at the sixth South East European Cooperation Process summit in Belgrade in April 8-9, 2003.⁵²² In his speech Erdoğan expressed sincere condolences for the death of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić. Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized the need to follow Đinđić's ideals of reforms not only in his own state but also in the whole Balkan region, claiming peace and stability in all surrounding states. Erdoğan also said that reform process and the form of cooperation among the Balkan countries could serve as a model for other regions. In the closing part of his speech he stated that:

“In front of the world we do not have anymore a fragmented and divided Balkans, familiar with the notion of Balkanism. On the contrary, we are in the process of a stable cooperation that is being strengthened every day with the aim that in future the Balkans to serve as a model”.⁵²³

Before returning to Ankara, Erdoğan to the reporters said that Balkan cooperation process is an example for other regions regarding the protection of stability and security.⁵²⁴

⁵²² The South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) was initiated in 1996 at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEECP held in Sofia/Bulgaria. This regional cooperation forum has as ambition to enhance the relations with the neighbours from South East Europe (SEE), and transforming this region into an area of peace, security, stability and cooperation, with the objective of full integration of SEE into EU and NATO structures. The Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in SEE, adopted in Bucharest in 2000, represents the essential document of the SEECP. The SEECP consists of 13 participants from the South East European region. The participants of this regional cooperation meet at the level of Heads of State / Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Political Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, under the chairmanship of the participant that holds the one year rotating presidency.”South-East European Cooperation Process - SEECP”, **Regional Cooperation Council**, <https://www.rcc.int/pages/111/south-east-european-cooperation-process--seecp>, [03.11.2019].

⁵²³ “Yeni Körfez Savaşı Yükünü Çekemeyiz”, **Hürriyet**, 09.04.2003, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/yenikorfezsavasiyukunuçekemeyiz139175?fbclid=IwAR1gjqxQSZSTbjpNnUbKqNY2XxaQwNmIp4YLJyastLxEHC2PCgpdD4aD7Kk>, [03.11.2019].

A year later, Prime Minister Erdoğan attended to the seventh SEECP summit in Sarajevo, reiterating the same stance from last Belgrade summit saying that, “The Balkans was no more remembered with negative terms but remembered with terms like ethnic harmony, mutual respect and co-existence in peace”. In context to this Erdoğan added that:

“When the founding efforts for the SEECP began about eight years ago, today's level of co-operation among the Balkan countries from the perspective of that time was unimaginable. Today, ongoing reform process and cooperation in our region have reached an exemplary level for other regions in the world “.⁵²⁵

In this summit Erdoğan used the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Adnan Terzić of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader of Croatia and with Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano.⁵²⁶

3.1.3.1. Intensification of Turkey's Cooperation with Western Balkan Countries Under Justice and Development Party

JDP leadership continued to hold and intensify the good relations inherited from the past, especially during the 1990s, with frequent visits through bilateral meetings with the governments of Western Balkan countries particularly with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Just as in the 1990s, where these countries at the regional level had the biggest support from Turkey, this approach continued after 2002 too.

In 2005, at the invitation by Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Albania after a five-years when for a last time a Turkish Prime Minister visited Albania. Turkish Prime Minister in this visit was accompanied by State Minister Beşir Atalay, Minister of Transport Binali Yıldırım and a large business delegation. Erdoğan held meetings with Albanian

⁵²⁴ “Balkans: Nine Leaders Stress Regional Cooperation In Belgrade”, **Radio Free Europe**, 09.04.2003, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1102875.html>, [03.11.2019].

⁵²⁵ “Anadolu Agency: News in English”, **HR-Net**, 21.04.2004, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/2004/04-04-21.anadolu.html>, [04.11.2019].

⁵²⁶ **Ibid.**

President Alfred Mojsiu, Parliament Speaker Servet Pellumbi and his counterpart Fatos Nano.⁵²⁷

After the meeting with Nano, at the press conference Erdoğan emphasized that,

“Relations between Albania and Turkey are friendly and solid. Our common cultural characteristics relies on for centuries. The Balkans, and in particular Albania, already occupy a leading position in Turkey's foreign policy and Turkey has provided the necessary support to Albania in every field in the past 15 years, and will continue to do so in the future.”⁵²⁸

As for trade volume Erdoğan stated that is insufficient trade volume between two countries that reach around \$ 160 million. According to him the meetings that will be held by the businessmen of both countries will certainly give a new impetus to this cooperation and the governments of both countries will support them. In this meeting was signed an agreement in the field of maritime transport. With this agreement Turkey and Albania eliminated the deficiency in increasing trade volume between these two countries.⁵²⁹ While Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano emphasized also the need to boost economic relations between two countries and noted that the direct investment of Turkish capital in Albania exceeds the level of \$ 80 million which should be encouraged more. Prime Minister Nano noted that cooperation in the fields of law, transport, education, health and especially university and postgraduate studies is very important.⁵³⁰ From the statements of both prime ministers it can be seen that one of the first elements in the focus of both governments was the further strengthening of trade and economic cooperation. That's why was signed the agreement of maritime transport and were brought delegation of businessmen from Turkey in Albania.

During this meeting the Euro-Atlantic perspective has not been neglected also. Prime Minister Nano ensured that Albania has unwavering support from Turkey for NATO membership and expressed gratitude to Turkish MP's, which on 22 June 2004 adopted the resolution in support of the Adriatic Charter countries for NATO accession.

⁵²⁷ “Erdoğan Arnavutluk'ta”, **Vatan**, 15.02.2005, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/erdogan-arnavutluk-ta-47048-gundem/>, [03.11.2019].

⁵²⁸ “Kryeministri Fatos Nano është takuar Sot në Selinë e Këshillit të Ministrave në Tiranë, me Kryeministrin e Republikës së Turqisë, Recep Tayyip Erdogan dhe delegacionin që e shoqëron”, **Republika e Shqipërisë Këshilli i Ministrave**, 15.02.2005, <http://arkiva.km.gov.al/?fq=brenda&m=news&lid=5013>, [03.11.2019].

⁵²⁹ **Ibid.**

⁵³⁰ **Ibid.**

Additionally he appreciated Turkey's achievements in the process of EU integration which can be good reference for the Western Balkan countries. While Erdoğan reaffirmed the support for Albanian candidacy for NATO membership, noting that Turkey will advocate for Albania in every occasion regarding Euro-Atlantic integrations.⁵³¹ During this visit, Prime Minister Erdoğan paid homage to the "Martyrs of the Nation", visited the Office of Military Aid and Coordination and also inaugurated the start of the second phase of works for the new complex of the Turkish college "Turgut Özal" in Tirana.⁵³²

Following his visit to Albania, Prime Minister Erdoğan continued the mini-Balkan tour in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Sarajevo Erdoğan was accompanied by the same delegation that was in Albania. The delegation was welcomed by Bosnian Prime Minister Adnan Terzić. In this meeting were discussed the ways how to improve the economic relations and for this purpose was signed an agreement to eliminate double taxation.⁵³³ From this agreement Erdoğan expected to be encouraged Turkish businessmen to invest in Bosnia. As in Albania, so in Bosnia, the Turkish Prime Minister has emphasized the full support of Turkey for Bosnia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. In addition to the protocol meetings, Erdoğan visited the historic "Baščaršija" (old bazaar), which was built when Bosnia was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1463 to 1878.⁵³⁴ It should be noted that during the first years of JDP's governance, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been one of the most visited destinations from Turkish leadership. High-level state visits also took place in 2003 and 2004 when the Mostar

⁵³¹ **Ibid.**

⁵³² "Kryeministri i Turqisë, Recep Tayyip Erdogan dhe Delegacioni që e Shoqëron ka Përfunduar Sot Paradite Vizitën Zyrtare në Shqipëri", **Republika e Shqipërisë Këshilli i Ministrave**, 16.02.2005, <http://arkiva.km.gov.al/?fq=brenda&m=news&lid=5017>, [03.11.2019].

⁵³³ The Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation in Income and Taxes on Wealth between Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Turkey was signed at 16 February 2005 and published in official journal at 01.06.2006. The full text of the agreement you can see in "Milletlerarası Andlaşma", **Resmî Gazete**: 26487, 08.04.2007, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2007/04/20070408-2.htm>, [04.11.2019].

⁵³⁴ "Mehmetçiğe Herkes Minnettar", **Türkiye Gazetesi**, 17.02.2005, <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/Genel/a236552.aspx>, [04.11.2019].

bridge was restored 9 years after its destruction by the Croatian army during the Bosnian war.⁵³⁵

Following the Balkan mini-tour that Erdoğan had in February 2005, in March of the same year, Macedonian Prime Minister Vlado Bučkovski paid a two day official visit to Ankara after the invitation of Turkish Prime Minister. In Ankara, Prime Minister Bučkovski met with his counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President Ahmed Necdet Sezer and with Vice President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ismail Alpçekin. Bučkovski also participated in the Macedonian-Turkish Business Forum in Istanbul as part of this visit.⁵³⁶

Even in this meeting the development of economic relations was among the main topics of discussion. The trade volume between Turkey and Macedonia is insufficient but having in mind the very positive relations between the two countries, there was optimism that there will be a positive progress of cooperation.⁵³⁷ Emphasizing the deep cultural, humanitarian and historical relationship between the two nations, Turkish Prime Minister stressed that the visit would lend new momentum to this relationship. Regarding the volume of trade relations between two countries, by the end of 2004 was reached \$ 200 million which is a 100% increase from the year of 2002, but both prime ministers stated that this is insufficient and the goal is to increase the trade volume. In this regard, in recent years in the trade sector, Turkey has proven to have strong companies that have decided to invest in Macedonia. Erdoğan said that with direct investments, relations between two states will be much richer and the trust will be

⁵³⁵ The rebuilt Mostar bridge was opened on July 23, 2004. High-level officials from Turkey such as State Minister Beşir Atalay, State Minister Mehmet Aydın, Minister of Housing and Public Works Erkan Mumcu, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Minister Sami Güclü and delegation of some bureaucrats attended in the opening ceremony of Mostar Bridge. Prime Minister Erdoğan was also scheduled to speak at the opening ceremony but due to a train accident in Pamukova canceled his participation. The reconstruction of the bridge was a project initiated by UNESCO and financially supported by World Bank, European Bank including countries like Turkey, Italy, Netherlands, Croatia. Total cost of the project was \$ 20 million, in which Turkey had donated \$ 1 million. Meanwhile, In 2002 the construction company Er-Bu from Ankara won the tender to repair the Mostar Bridge in a tender competition. "Mostar köprüsü açıldı", **Hürriyet**, 23.07.2004, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/mostar-koprusu-acildi-243496>, [05.11.2019].

⁵³⁶ "Анкара: Премиерот Бучковски во Турција", **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 15.05.2005, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/1476450.html>, [05.11.2019].

⁵³⁷ "Не Визи, туку Турски Инвестиции", **Time**, 16.03.2005, <https://time.mk/arhiva/?dnevnik=1&fulltext=2&timeup=2&q>, [20.10.2019].

enhanced more.⁵³⁸ The total value of Turkish investments in Macedonia reached \$ 100 million, which is estimated as insufficient. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Minco Jordanov and State Minister Beşir Atalay signed a protocol for cooperation between the governments of the two countries.⁵³⁹ During this visit also were discussed topics like education and culture. Erdoğan emphasized that in Macedonia are many rich historical monuments particularly in Skopje and Ohrid. He said that in Skopje for example Turkey can provide the necessary assistance for the restoration of Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge.⁵⁴⁰ As during the bilateral meetings with the leadership of Albania and Bosnia also in the case of Macedonia, Turkey expressed its readiness to support in the Euro-Integration process. In the area of defense and security, cooperation between two countries will continue. TIKa cooperation protocol was also signed during this meeting. Through TIKa, relations between two states will have a even more progressive course, emphasized Turkish Prime Minister.⁵⁴¹ While Bučkovski conveyed an novelty to the Turkish side stating that in Macedonia the Turkish language will be one of the official languages at the local level.⁵⁴² This issue is regulated with the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Law on Local Self-Government in 2004. According to legal provisions, in municipalities, the Macedonian and its Cyrillic script is the official language. But, official language are also languages used by at least 20% of the other ethnic groups residents of the municipality. Municipalities with a population of over 20% in which Turkish community lives are the municipality of Cair in Skopje, municipality of Gostivar, municipality of Kercova, Centar Jupa, Studeničani, Plasnica, Vrapčiste and Dojran.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁸ “Macedonian Prime Minister Visits Turkey”, **HR-Net**, 16.03.2005, <http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/trkpr/2005/05-03-16.trkpr.html#03>, [05.11.2019].

⁵³⁹ “Турција не Планира Визи за Македонските Граѓани”, **Time**, 16.03.2005, <https://time.mk/arhiva/?vreme=1&fulltext=2&timeup=2&q>, [22.10.2019].

⁵⁴⁰ “Erdoğan Makedon Başbakanı İle”, **İnternet Haber**, 15.03.2005, <https://www.internethaber.com/erdogan-makedon-basbakani-ile-1113540h.htm>, [05.11.2019].

⁵⁴¹ “Makedonya'ya Yunan ayıbı!”, **Türkiye Gazetesi**, 16.03.2005, <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/Genel/a239808.aspx>, [27.10.2019].

⁵⁴² “Makedonya Türkçe'yi Resmî Dil Yapacak”, **Yeni Şafak**, 16.03.2005, <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/makedonya-turkceyi-resm-dil-yapacak-2714581>, [06.11.2019].

⁵⁴³ Cüneyt Davut, “Türkçe Kırçova'da 'Resmi Dil' Oldu”, **Anadolu Ajans**, 30.06.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkce-kircovada-resmi-dil-oldu/600432>, [28.10.2019].

Macedonian Prime Minister Bučkovski also attended in the Turkish-Macedonian Business Council meeting in Istanbul. At the business forum Bučkovski emphasized that Macedonia is expecting Turkish investments to reach \$ 80 million by the end of the year. For this purpose Bučkovski invited more than 40 Turkish companies to invest in Macedonia. According to him, Turkish investments in Macedonia from 1991 to 2003 amounted to \$ 21.3 million. Macedonian Prime Minister highlighted possibilities for investment to Turkish businessmen in telecommunications, energy, gasification and oil industry, collaboration of construction companies in third countries and greater cooperation in tourism. In this regard Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board representative Çelik Kurdoğlu said that Exim Bank will support Turkish companies investing in rebuilding Skopje's airport, road construction and public housing.⁵⁴⁴

The reciprocal visits between these two countries did not stop even in the following period. In June 2006, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan paid an official visit to the Republic of Macedonia for the first time. During this visit, the Turkish Prime Minister had meetings with President Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Vlado Bučkovski and Parliament Speaker Ljupco Jordanovski.⁵⁴⁵

Between two delegations several topics were discussed, among them the status of the Turkish minority in Macedonia. Turkey is satisfied with the status of Turkish minority in Macedonia and the treatment of Turks in education and science. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan toward the authorities in Skopje noted that the Turkish community which represents 3 percent of the population, should be properly represented in the Macedonian Army. Whereas the hosts of this meeting, Macedonian Prime Minister Vlado Bučkovski⁵⁴⁶ and President Branko Crvenkovski asked from Erdoğan to contribute in

⁵⁴⁴ “Македонија Очекува 80 Милиони Долари од Турција”, **Time**, 17.03.2005, <https://time.mk/arhiva/d1=01&m1=01&y1=1991&d2=31&m2=12&y2=2012&all=0&dnevnik=1&fulltext=2&timeup=2&show=1&q>, [25.10.2019].

⁵⁴⁵ “Турскиот Премиер во Посета на Македонија”, **Time**, 12.06.2006, [https://time.mk/arhiva/d1=01&m1=01&y1=1991&d2=31&m2=12&y2=2006&all=1&fulltext=1&timeup=2&show=1&q=](https://time.mk/arhiva/d1=01&m1=01&y1=1991&d2=31&m2=12&y2=2006&all=1&fulltext=1&timeup=2&show=1&q=%)%, [30.10.2019].

⁵⁴⁶ During the interview with former Prime Minister Vlado Bučkovski we had opportunity to hear some personal experiences during the arrival of the Turkish State Delegation in Macedonia in 2006. He said that in June 2006 when Turkish delegation came in Skopje was finalized the deal for the major support in restoration of the old Turkish bazaar. Erdoğan paid an visit to Hotel Stone Bridge to meet current Honorary Consul of Turkey in Macedonia Mr. Aydogan Amedovski, who has had close friendly relationships since the time he was in opposition and a political prisoner. Bučkovski said that Erdoğan was

opening a Turkish cultural center and restoration center for Ottoman monuments in Macedonia. Additionally Turkish leadership reiterates support for Macedonia on its path to Euro-Atlantic integration.⁵⁴⁷

Talks on improvement of economic relations were not marginalised at this meeting too. Total Turkish investments in Macedonia have only reached at \$100 million during this 15 years.⁵⁴⁸ For this purpose, together with the state delegation, over 100 Turkish businessmen were brought to Macedonia in order to be more closely acquainted with the opportunities that Macedonia provides to foreign investors.⁵⁴⁹ In the joint business forum of Turkish and Macedonian businessmen organized in Skopje, were highlighted the reasons for the low investment by Turkish businessmen in Macedonia. Unfavorable free trade agreement, bureaucratic obstacles and poor promotion of the country in Turkey were the reasons that only a few local companies in the past 15 years decided to enter the Macedonian market. Turkish businessmen point out that conditions offered to them in Macedonia are unattractive compared to the conditions they can obtain in other countries in the region. President of the Association of Turkish Businessmen in Macedonia Kemal Nazim stated that Food giant Ülker recently showed interest in investing in Macedonia but at the last minute they decided to make the investment in Romania because the authorities there offered them tax breaks but also provided them other benefits.⁵⁵⁰ By 2006, the largest Turkish investments in Macedonia were Ramstore

really fascinated by the Turkish Bazaar, and that protocol provided 2 hours to walk within Old Bazaar, but due to the great interest shown by the shopkeepers in the Bazaar, it was delayed to 4 hours. Although it is known that one of the most stringent protocols in Europe is the Turkish protocol, it could not save the Turkish prime minister from the curiosity and desire to enter the shops and have a brief conversation with the people. At that time Erdoğan was extremely popular in Macedonia and the best prove was the sympathycal welcome by people at he Bazaar. Interview with Prof. Dr. Vlado Bučkovski, former Minister of Defence in 2001 and Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia between 2004-2006, 03.04.2019.

⁵⁴⁷ Goran Petreski, “Турска поддршка за Македонија на патот кон ЕУ и НАТО”, **Deutsche Welle**, 14.06.2006, <https://www.dw.com/mk/>, [01.11.2019].

⁵⁴⁸ “На Добрите Македонско-Турски Односи им Треба Економска Корекција”, **Time**, 15.06.2006, <https://time.mk/arhiva/?d1=01&m1=01&y1=1991&d2=15&m2=06&y2=2006&all=1&fulltext=1&timeup=2&show=1&q=&read=5dbc82850183c64>, [02.11.2019].

⁵⁴⁹ “Ердоган во Посета на Македонија”, **BBC Macedonian**, 13.06.2006, http://www.bbc.co.uk/macedonian/news/story/2006/06/060613_bucko_erdogan.shtml, [03.11.2019].

⁵⁵⁰ “Турските Гиганти не ја Познаваат Македонија”, **Time**, 15.06.2006, <https://time.mk/arhiva/d1=01&m1=01&y1=1991&d2=31&m2=12&y2=2006&all=1&fulltext=1&timeup=2&show=1&q=%D>, [04.11.2019].

Mall, Dolomit Production Plant, Zirat Bank, Zorlu Holding Textile Company and the Panorama Hotel, project worth of 35 million euros.⁵⁵¹

3.1.3.2. Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Turkey and Montenegro as a New Sovereign State

Almost 90 years since her establishment, the last traces of former Yugoslavia came to an end upon Montenegro's declaration of independence on June 3, 2006. The results of May 21, 2006 referendum, where about 90% of Montenegrins voted for secession from the union with Serbia - effectively put an end what remained from Yugoslavia. The people of Montenegro voted 55.4% pro Montenegro's independence. Whereas the EU set a 55% minimum of "Yes" in order the referendum for independence to be considered valid. This implies that referendum for independence passed successfully at limit.⁵⁵² After the Union of Serbia and Montenegro ended its existence, Serbia became legal successor of the union, meanwhile Montenegro as new country re-applied for membership in the international organizations.

Very shortly after the declaration of independence, Turkey recognized Montenegro as a sovereign and independent state on June 12, 2006 and one month later on July 3, 2006 established diplomatic relations with this country. Turkey was among the first states to recognize the independence of Montenegro in accordance with the importance that it pays to the peace, prosperity and stability in the region and considers Montenegro as a friendly country with whom aim to develop excellent level of relations. Turkey strongly supports the efforts of Montenegro for the Euro-Atlantic integrations, which is also a top priority of Montenegrin foreign policy. Meanwhile, in close cooperation with Turkey, "Montenegro acts in solidarity in regional and international organizations and platforms".⁵⁵³

Between Turkey and Montenegro it can be said that exist traditionally good cultural relations. For Montenegro, Turkey is one of the most significant diaspora states, and the

⁵⁵¹ **Ibid.**

⁵⁵² "Montenegro Confirms Independence", **The Guardian**, 22.05.2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/may/22/balkans1>, [06.11.2019].

⁵⁵³ "Relations between Turkey and Montenegro", **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-montenegro%20.en.mfa>, [12.11.2019].

existence of these communities that migrated to Turkey in certain periods of time represent another asset and motivation for the enhancement of bilateral relations. It is considered that in Turkey there are more than 250,000 residents who by origin are Montenegrins.⁵⁵⁴ Comparing with the population in Montenegro which have around 650,000 inhabitants, Turkey is the biggest Montenegrin diaspora.⁵⁵⁵ An important factor in relations between two states is the existence of the Bosniaks, Montenegrin Muslims and Albanians that comprise 17 % of the population of Montenegro with whom Turkey has historically had close relations with these communities.⁵⁵⁶

A common foreign policy goal for both states is the developing of good neighborly relations and collaboration which is significant for regional prosperity. Both Turkey and Montenegro have showed a high level of solidarity when their neighboring countries and their citizens have had difficult moments such as the war situation. Montenegro has received more than 100,000 refugees during the conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia and Turkey hosted over 3 million refugees from Syria in the period from 2012 to 2015.⁵⁵⁷

It should be noted that one year after the independence of Montenegro, in 2007 Turkey opened Turkey's Agency for International Development and Coordination (TIKA). After opening an office in Podgorica, TIKA provided significant funds across Montenegro to improve conditions in schools, hospitals, infrastructure, as well as in the cultural field. Details on the role and activities of TIKA in the Western Balkans will be analyzed later in the PhD dissertation.⁵⁵⁸

Regarding official visits, at the invitation of Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, in January 18-19, 2008, Montenegro's Foreign Minister Milan Ročen comes for the first

⁵⁵⁴ Relations between Turkey and Montenegro”, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁵⁵ Mehmedin Tahirovic, “Relations between Turkey and the Balkan Countries as in a Function of Improving the Regional Peace and Stability”, **Adam Akademi**, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2014): 73.

⁵⁵⁶ “Relations between Turkey and Montenegro”, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁵⁷ Tahirovic, “Relations between Turkey and the Balkan Countries”, 73.

⁵⁵⁸ “TIKA od 2007. Godine Realizovala 185 Projekata Širom Crne Gore”, **TRT**, 11.11.2014, <https://www.trt.net.tr/bosanski/region/2014/11/11/tika-od-2007-godine-realizovala-185-projekata-sirom-crne-gore-32270>, [12.11.2019].

time to an official visit to Turkey.⁵⁵⁹ The first meeting turned out to be productive with signature of three important agreements, “Cooperation Protocol between the Foreign Ministries of the Two Countries”, “Agreement on Cooperation between the Foreign Ministries' Training Centers and Diplomatic Academies” and “Agreement on Visa Exemption between the Two Countries”.⁵⁶⁰

In addition to the signed agreements, at the meeting were discussed issues related to the region as well as issues of interest to both countries. Babacan stressed that Turkey was among first states to recognize Montenegro's independence and established diplomatic relations. Babacan also expressed Turkey's full support for Montenegro's integration in EU and NATO.⁵⁶¹ While Montenegrin minister Ročen thanked Turkey for all its efforts for Montenegro. In particular, Ročen emphasized that they want to see Turkish investments in Montenegro. He said that, “We want Turkish investors to be in different sectors of the economy”. In this regard, a free trade agreement between Turkey and Montenegro was signed on November 26, 2008 in order to have a higher trade volume between two countries. The signatory on behalf of Turkey was State Minister Kürşad Tüzmen while from Montenegrin part was the Minister of Economic Development Branimir Gvozdenović.⁵⁶² The trade volume between two states was around \$ 50 million in 2008, in favor of Turkey. It fallen to \$32 million in 2009 as a result of global economic crisis but was recovered a little bit in 2010. After the crisis, it made a big jump rising to \$42 million in 2011 comparing with \$33 million in 2010.⁵⁶³ In terms of investments, the Turkish contracting company Gintaş, headquartered in Bursa, in 2008 started the construction of a shopping center called "Mall of Montenegro" in the Montenegrin capital Podgorica with a covered area of 59 acres and a project worth 36

⁵⁵⁹ “NO:5 - 15 Ocak 2008, Karadağ Dışişleri Bakanı Milan Ročen'in Türkiye'ye Yapacağı Resmi Ziyaret hk.”, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_5---15-ocak-2008---karadag-disisleri-bakani-milan-rocen_inturkiye_ye-yapacagi-resmi-ziyaret-hk_.tr.mfa, **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı**, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁶⁰ “Avrupa'nın en Yeni Ülkesine Tam Destek”, **Türkiye Gazetesi**, 19.01.2008, <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/Genel/a363025.aspx>, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁶¹ “Bakan Babacan-karadağ Dışişleri Bakanı Ročen Görüşmesi”, **Son Dakika**, 18.01.2008, <https://www.sondakika.com/amp/haber-bakan-babacan-karadag-disisleri-bakani-rocen/>, [13.11.2019].

⁵⁶² “Türkiye – Karadağ Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması”, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/data/5bfbfa0513b8762fa4955ca7/Karada%C4%9F%20STA%20Bilgi%20Notu-2019.pdf>, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁶³ Abdullah Bozkurt, “Today's Zaman: Turkey and Montenegro - Two Best Examples in Balkans”, **Prime Minister of Montenegro**, 20 March 2012, <http://www.predsjudnik.gov.me/en/press-center/interviews/112824/Today-s-Zaman.html>, [10.11.2019].

million euros. This first Turkish investment in Montenegro was fully operational as of 23 September 2010.⁵⁶⁴ Other largest Turkish businesses present in Montenegro are the Tosçelik iron and steel factory in the city of Niksić, Globalport company located in Bar which invests in marinas, cruisers and cruise ships, Sancaklı wood factory that produce furniture located in Rožaje, Ziraat Bank, Acibadem Grubu, Sante Plus Istanbul, Enza Home - Yataş, Tudors etc, located in Podgorica.⁵⁶⁵

In 2009 in Montenegro for the first time a Turkish president comes for an official visit. Turkish President Abdullah Gül came to Montenegro accompanied by the Minister of State in charge of Women and Family Selma Aliye Kavaf, Minister of State in charge of Foreign Trade Zafer Çağlayan, Minister of Industry and Trade Nihat Ergün, MP's and businessmen. During the two-day visit, President Gül held meetings with the Montenegrin State delegation, more concretely with Montenegrin President Filip Vujanović, Parliament Speaker Ranko Krivokapić and Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović.⁵⁶⁶ Following the meeting between delegations of the two countries were signed two agreements, the Economic Cooperation Agreement and the Agreement on the International Carriage of Passengers and Goods by Road.⁵⁶⁷

President Gül at a press conference stated that representatives of two countries discussed bilateral and regional developments. Gül has paid special attention to the importance of consultation and cooperation regarding the issues related to security and stability with all the countries of the Balkan region. The Turkish president indicated that Turkey is a strong supporter of Montenegro's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and in the name of Turkey he expressed the readiness to help Montenegro during the process of membership in NATO. As for the EU, Gül has stressed Turkey's desire to see

⁵⁶⁴ "2008'de Balkanlar", **Milliyet**, 19.12.2008, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/2008-de-balkanlar-1030106>, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁶⁵ Jasmin Spahić, "Karadağ-Türkiye İlişkileri", **Crna Gora Turska**, 23.12.2015, <https://www.crnagoraturkska.com/karadag-turkiye-iliskileri/>, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁶⁶ "Cumhurbaşkanı Gül Karadağ'da", **Yeni Şafak**, 11.12.2009, <https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/cumhurbaskani-gul-karadagda-228220>, [12.11.2019].

⁵⁶⁷ "Karadağ'ı Ziyaret Eden İlk Türk Cumhurbaşkanı", 11.12.2009, <http://www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/haberler/170/48529/karadagi-ziyaret-eden-ilk-turk-cumhurbaskani.html>, [13.11.2019].

Montenegro within the EU.⁵⁶⁸ His counterpart, Montenegrin President Vujanović expressed his satisfaction with the visit of President Gül calling it historical because it is happening 130 years after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and the former Principality of Montenegro.⁵⁶⁹ Vujanović also indicated that Montenegro has suitable places for important capital investments. In addition, the Montenegrin president thanked TİKA for his work in Montenegro.⁵⁷⁰

President Gül together with his counterpart Vujanović participated in the Business Forum Meeting. In the forum Gül said that Montenegrin leadership is waiting for Turkish investors. He also pointed out that Montenegro could be one of the most important logistics centers of Europe and asked Turkish businessmen to evaluate investment opportunities especially in the fields of energy transportation and tourism. Meanwhile, Vujanović said that this business forum is the largest forum held in Montenegro so far.⁵⁷¹ Energy and Natural Resources Deputy Minister Murat Mercan stated that Turkey aims to reach a trade volume of \$ 100 million in Montenegro. There is a very favorable environment for Turkish investments in Montenegro: The income per capita is around \$ 11,000 and the size of tourists during the summer is twice that of the citizens of the country.⁵⁷²

President Gül ended his official visit to Montenegro by visiting the medresa in Podgorica. Presidents Gül and Vujanović were welcomed on the Medresa by the reis (head) of the Islamic Community in Montenegro, Rifat ef. Fejzić together with his associates. Rifat ef. Fejzić, welcomed the guests and expressed gratitude to the Turkish people and the state for their assistance in the construction of the Medrese and numerous other projects related to the revitalization, protection and preservation of cultural heritage in the territory of Montenegro. Fejzić emphasized the role of TİKA that helped to complete this building and get Madrassa into operation. Whereas President Gül

⁵⁶⁸ “Cumhurbaşkanı Gül'den İşbirliği Çağrısı”, **Haber7**, 11.12.2009,

<http://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/461421-cumhurbaskani-gulden-isbirligi-cagrisi>, [13.11.2019].

⁵⁶⁹ “Cetinje, Predsjednik Turske u Zvaničnoj Posjeti Crnoj Gori”, 11.12.2009, <http://www.filip-vujanovic.me/?akcija=vijest&id=2623>, [13.11.2019].

⁵⁷⁰ “Cumhurbaşkanı Gül'den işbirliği çağrısı”, [13.11.2019].

⁵⁷¹ “Karadağ havaalanını Türkler yapacak”, **Takvim**, 13.12.2009,

https://www.takvim.com.tr/ekonomi/2009/12/13/karadag_havaalanini_turkler_yapacak, [13.11.2019]

⁵⁷² Esra Biçer, Büşra Doğru, “Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye-Karadağ İlişkileri”, **Tuic Akademi**, 22.05.2013, <http://www.tuicakademi.org/gecmisten-gunumuze-turkiye-karadag-iliskileri/>, [15.11.2015].

expressed his happiness to be a guest in this school and to meet the students and professors of Madrasa. Gül emphasized that he is pleased that the school is offering other knowledge besides religious knowledge and has no doubt that these students will be the best representatives of Islam.⁵⁷³

It can be noted that since her independence Montenegro developed good relations with Turkey. Having in mind that Turkey is one of the most influential states within NATO, Montenegrins aimed to have a strong ally like Turkey within this organization that can lobby for her integration. In addition, the presence of the Muslim community in Montenegro which is a topic of interest of Turkey's foreign policy, as well as Montenegro's need for support during the integration process in international organizations such as NATO and the need for foreign investment, perhaps were determining factor for a positive interaction between these two states.

3.1.4. Turkey's Diplomatic Position in the Process of Kosovo's Independence

When the international community ended the conflict in Kosovo in 1999, Kosovo Albanians and the Serbian regime couldn't reach any peace agreement. The international intervention led by NATO took place in attempt to stop the state-sponsored violence under the Milošević regime against Albanians from Kosovo, which consisted of the ethnic cleansing and expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo into neighbouring countries like Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. NATO's actions together with the UN was a determinant factor, imposing peace by placing Kosovo under international administration.⁵⁷⁴ UN Security Council resolution 1244, which was passed on 10 June 1999, allowed an international civil presence for the realization of basic administrative functions.⁵⁷⁵ According to the resolution,

⁵⁷³ "Predsjednik Republike Turske Abdullah Gül Posjetio Medresu u Podgoricu", **Seher**, 13.12.2009, http://www.seher.me/index.php?akcion=colums&main_id=529, [15.11.2019].

⁵⁷⁴ Gëzim Visoka, **Shaping Peace in Kosovo - The Politics of Peacebuilding and Statehood** (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 33.

⁵⁷⁵ Kaiyan H. Kaikobad, "Another Frozen Conflict: Kosovo's Unilateral Declaration of Independence and International Law", Kosovo: A Precedent? **The Declaration of Independence, the Advisory Opinion and Implications for Statehood, Self- Determination and Minority Rights**, ed. James Summers (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2011): 56.

“Serbian forces were to withdraw from Kosovo and to be replaced by a NATO-led force and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which was to be responsible in managing the political process and determining Kosovo’s future status.”⁵⁷⁶

It took the international community about six years to start the negotiations that will determine Kosovo's status. In co-ordination with the UN Security Council, Secretary-General Kofi Annan decided to give to Martti Ahtisaari the task of negotiating Kosovo status. In 2006, the mission headquarters in Vienna (UNOSEK) hosted the delegations from Kosovo and Serbia which had 17 rounds of negotiations in a period of two years.⁵⁷⁷ Martti Ahtisaari led intensive negotiations for more than two years. In the negotiations participated Serbian leadership and the Kosovar Albanian leadership, including the “Contact Group” – as well as an informal group of experienced diplomats from the states like USA, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia. In a situation where was impossible to find a solution between Kosovar Albanian demand on independence and Serbian insistence that Kosovo remain part of Serbia, Ahtisaari presented a detailed plan for Kosovo’s supervised independence to the UNSC in March 2007.⁵⁷⁸ The Ahtisaari Plan contained:

“A main text with 15 articles that arranged its general principles as well as 12 annexes that elaborated upon them. The Ahtisaari Plan focused on protecting the rights, culture and the identity for the non-Albanian communities, including a framework for their active role in public life. The plan suggested that Kosovo become independent, subject to a period of international supervision.”⁵⁷⁹

Serbia rejected the proposal or the Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo's status, and Serbia's ally Russia blocked in the Security Council of UN from supporting the plan – even though the plan had the full support of Annan’s successor, Ban Ki-moon. On other side, Kosovar Albanian leadership accepted the Ahtisaari Plan emphasizing that will fulfill all her necessary provisions into Kosovan law. And this actually happened, after the

⁵⁷⁶ Tim Judah, **Kosovo What Everyone Needs to Know**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91.

⁵⁷⁷ Albert Rohan, “Kosovo's Path to Independence”, **European Council on Foreign Relations**, 02.02.2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_kosovos_path_to_independence, [16.11.2019].

⁵⁷⁸ Henry H. Perritt, **The Road to Independence for Kosovo - A Chronicle of Ahtisaari Plan** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

⁵⁷⁹ “Summary of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement”, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, **U.S. Department of State**, 22.02.2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/101244.htm>, [17.11.2019].

declaration of independence the Kosovo Parliament voted the main points from the Ahtisaari plan.⁵⁸⁰

Throughout this period of determining Kosovo's final status, it is worth noting that Turkey was not one of the main protagonists in this process, but remained present with its personnel both in KFOR and UNMIK and later in EULEX (launched in 2008) as a civilian mission under the EU which aimed to assist Kosovo authorities in establishing a stable rule of law institutions.

Prior to the declaration of Kosovo's independence, it can be said that Turkey had established diplomatic relations with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) under UNMIK's rule. This can best be seen with the signing of various co-operation agreements between Turkey and PISG. On 18 December 2003, a cooperation agreement in the health sector was signed between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Turkey and the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self Government (Ministry of Health), acting on behalf of the United Nations in Kosovo.⁵⁸¹ A year later on August 26, 2004, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey signed an agreement with Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self Government (Kosovo's Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry). According to this agreement, Turkey assumed responsibility for the restoration of the monuments during the Ottoman period in Kosovo. Some examples include the Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren, the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Mosque in Pristina, the tomb of Sultan Murat in Pristina, Prizren Castle and İpek-Kızıl Mosque. As outlined in the agreement, these monuments were to be restored with the possible inclusion of further projects in the future.⁵⁸² On 15 September of the same year, there was further collaboration between the two countries. The Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning of Turkey and Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self Government (Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning) signed a memorandum of understanding, acting on behalf of the United Nations in Kosovo.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Rohan, "Kosovo's Path to Independence", [16.11.2019].

⁵⁸¹ Aksu, "Kosova Krizinde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası", 76.

⁵⁸² **Ibid.**

⁵⁸³ **Ibid.**

17 February 2008 is the date when Kosovo declared its independence for the second time⁵⁸⁴ and this event marked the final chapter of the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, a process that lasted 17 years. Compared to the declaration of the independence in 1991, the 2008 declaration was immediately recognized by a good number of important states of the international community like United States, France, Italy, Great Britain, Turkey and many other countries. In contrast, Russia aligned with Serbia in opposing independence.⁵⁸⁵

From the moment that the parliament of Kosovo declared independence and called on all countries to recognize the Republic of Kosovo, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan officially announced that Turkey recognized Kosovo's independence. In the statement, Babacan declares that:

“The Republic of Turkey has welcomed the content and elements of the declaration of independence, and with this understanding has decided to recognize the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. Securing peace and stability in the Balkans is one of Turkey’s foreign policy priorities. Turkey attaches importance to advance the understanding of lasting peace in the Balkans which has suffered immensely in recent years, and hopes that the independence of Kosovo will present an opportunity for the enhancement of stability and confidence among the countries in the region. Turkey believes that rule of law and the universal values of human rights, democracy and pluralism should be promoted in Kosovo. Turkey is also of the opinion that creating an atmosphere of mutual confidence and cooperation between Kosovo and her neighbours is essential. Turkey believes that its long-established historical, cultural and human ties with Kosovo will be further strengthened. Turkey will continue its assistance and contributions for the development of Kosovo.”⁵⁸⁶

Within the international community, Turkey, alongside the USA, United Kingdom and France, was among the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence. According to

⁵⁸⁴ Under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, Serbian parliament promulgated a new constitution on September 28, 1990 in which was foreseen the abolishment of the autonomy that had been given to Kosovo by the 1974 Constitution of Socialist Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, in October 1991, the newly founded “Assembly of the Kosovo Republic” proclaimed for the first time the independence of the Kosovo Republic, after the approval by almost all Kosovo Albanians in a referendum. In this case, Albania was the only state that recognized Kosovo as a independent state. Aydın Babuna, “Albanian National Identity and Islam in the post-Communist Era”, **Perceptions**, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2003):51.

⁵⁸⁵ Enika Abazi, “Kosovo Independence: An Albanian Perspective”, **SETA Policy Brief**, No. 11 (2008):2.

⁵⁸⁶ “Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Babacan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Regarding the Recognition of Kosovo by Turkey”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, 18.02.2008, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/statement-of-h_e_-mr_-ali-babacan_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic--of-turkey_-regarding-the-recognition-of-kosovo.en.mfa, [17.11.2019].

foreign representative offices, Turkey was the first country which submitted a letter of recognition to the leadership of Kosovo.⁵⁸⁷

Turkey's decision to recognize Kosovo's independence was not welcomed by Serbia at all. For all states that recognized Kosovo, including Turkey, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić ordered to its ambassadors to return back in Belgrade.⁵⁸⁸ The same applied to the Serbian ambassador to Ankara, Vladimir Curgus, who was recalled by the Serbian government for “consultations”.⁵⁸⁹ But several months later after this diplomatic maneuver, Serbia decided to send back its ambassadors to their places of duty after these consultations. The Serbian government said that the decision to continue diplomatic activities was taken in aims to protect Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁵⁹⁰

Despite Serbia's diplomatic actions at this phase, Turkey was decisive in its decision. Diplomatic and ambassadorial relations between Kosovo and Turkey were established on the same day after the recognition of independence. Turkey appointed its first Ambassador to Pristina (Metin Hüsrev Ünler) on April 21, 2009, a year after establishing diplomatic relations. Upon Ambassador Ünler's completion of service in December 2011, Turkey immediately appointed its next ambassador to Kosovo Songül Ozan, in January 2011, followed in 2015 by the next ambassador Kırılcım Kılıç, followed in 2019 by current ambassador Çağrı Sakar. Before Turkey opened its embassy in Kosovo, it had previously been operating through the Pristina Liaison Office since 1999. In response, Kosovo followed suit by appointing its first ambassador to Ankara on September 9, 2009. Kosovo's first ambassador to Turkey was Bekim Sejdiu.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁷ “Türkiye Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığını Tanıdı”, **CNN Turk**, 18.02.2008, <https://www.cnntrk.com/2008/turkiye/02/18/turkiye.kosovanin.bagimsizligini.tanidi/429583.0/index.html>, [18.11.2019].

⁵⁸⁸ “Turkey Recognizes Kosovo, Serbia Recalls its Ambassador”, **Hürriyet**, 19.02.2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/turkey-recognizes-kosovo-serbia-recalls-its-ambassador-8261160>, [29.10.2019].

⁵⁸⁹ “Sırbistan Ankara Büyükelçisini Geri Çağırıldı”, **Hürriyet**, 19.02.2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/sirbistan-ankara-buyukelcisini-geri-cagirdi-8261058>, [29.10.2019].

⁵⁹⁰ “Sırbistan, Büyükelçilerini Geri Gönderecek”, **Haberler**, 09.10.2008, <https://www.haberler.com/sirbistan-buyukelcilerini-geri-gonderecek-haberi/>, [30.10.2019].

⁵⁹¹ Shpend Kursani, Violeta Haxholli, Gent Gjokolli, “Kosova në Kontekst Rajonal: Marrëdhëniet Politike Bilaterale”, **KIPRED**, No. 3 (2014): 72.

The good relations between Kosovo and Turkey have been further strengthened by the fact that Turkey is strong supporter of Kosovo's international subjectivity and for this purpose actively has engaged in lobbying many international organizations and platforms for the recognition of the independence of Kosovo. Among the first organizations where Turkey raised the issue of recognizing Kosovo's independence was at a senior-level gathering of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), held in March 2008 in Dakar, Senegal. Turkey has been exerting significant efforts in OIC to make a statement that will give support to Kosovo's declaration of independence.⁵⁹²

The Turkish delegation, led by Foreign Minister Babacan, saw the event as a good opportunity to hold bilateral talks with other countries in order to increase support for Kosovo's recognition. Despite the efforts of Turkish leadership, the OIC highlighted only a “need to be in solidarity with the people of Kosovo”, without saying something concrete regarding the independence and as well without urging the member countries of OIC to recognize Kosovo's independence. State members of OIC such as Egypt, Sudan Azerbaijan, Indonesia were against any issuance of a statement by OIC that will be given full support of independence of Kosovo.⁵⁹³

Before this summit, exactly one day after the independence declaration of Kosovo, OIC secretary-general Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu issued a statement declaring that:

“Kosovo has finally declared its independence after a long and determined struggle by its people. As we rejoice in this happy result, we declare our solidarity with and support to our brothers and sisters there”. Additionally, Ihsanoglu emphasized that “The Islamic (nation) wishes them success in the new battle awaiting them, which is the building of a strong and prosperous state capable of satisfying its people. There is no doubt that the independence of Kosovo will be an asset to the Muslim world and further enhance joint Islamic action”.⁵⁹⁴

This implies that OIC's position as an organization has remained on the same line since the first day of Kosovo's independence. From the statement of the Secretary General, as well as from the position of the senior officials of the OIC countries in the summit, there is no difference. They have expressed satisfaction with the declaration of independence

⁵⁹² “Turkey Lobbying for Stronger Muslim Support for Kosovo at OIC”, **World Bulletin**, 11.03.2008, <https://www.worldbulletin.net/archive/turkey-lobbying-for-stronger-muslim-support-for-kosovo-at-oic-h19331.html>, [18.11.2019].

⁵⁹³ **Ibid.**

⁵⁹⁴ “Islamic States Bloc Welcomes Kosovo Independence”, **Reuters**, 19.02.2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-oic-idUSL1920770020080219>, [19.11.2019].

and solidarity with the Kosovar people without urging the state members of OIC to recognize Kosovo's independence.

However, Turkey has not stopped its efforts to internationalize the issue of Kosovo's independence. This was emphasized during the visit of Turkish Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Nazim Ekren and the Minister without portfolio Said Yazicioglu, in Kosovo on August 2008. After meeting with Kosovo's president Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, Yazicioglu said that:

Turkey had backed Kosovo in many areas. "Turkey has offered Kosovo support in many fields and it will continue to do so in the future. We are especially offering our assistance in the sphere of diplomacy, as we are advocating in the Islamic Conference countries the recognition of Kosovo as an independent state".⁵⁹⁵

Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan also reiterated this during his visit to Kosovo in January 2009. He stressed that immediately after Kosovo's declaration of independence, "Turkey began to raise the issue of recognition of Kosovo's independence in the organizations of which Turkey was a member".⁵⁹⁶ Additionally, Turkey is a candidate for membership in the European Union, and there is also using contacts to lobby for the recognition of Kosovo's independence. Turkey has done similarly within the framework of the Islamic Conference.⁵⁹⁷ In this visit, Ali Babacan and his counterpart from Kosovo, Skender Hyseni, signed an agreement on visa-free travel between the two countries. Citizens of Kosovo traveling to Turkey will no longer need a visa and the same applies to Turkish citizens wishing to visit Kosovo. Kosovo's Chamber of Commerce also signed a memorandum of cooperation during a meeting with Turkish businessmen. The establishment of the Turkish - Kosovo Business Council is expected to be a generator of economic cooperation between the two countries.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵ "Turkey 'Constantly Lobbying' for Kosovo", **Balkan Insight**, 27.08.2008, <https://balkaninsight.com/2008/08/27/turkey-constantly-lobbying-for-kosovo/>, [19.11.2019].

⁵⁹⁶ **Ibid.**

⁵⁹⁷ Edona Peci, "Përpjekje për Njohje të Reja", **Radio Evropa e Lire**, 13.01.2009, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/1369583.html>, [05.11.2019].

⁵⁹⁸ Bekim Shehu, "Turqia Angazhohet për Njohjen e Kosovës nga Vendet e Konferencës Islamike", **Deutsche Welle**, 13.01.2009, <https://www.dw.com/sq/turqia-angazhohet-p%C3%ABr-njohjen-e-kosov%C3%ABs-nga-vendet-e-konferenc%C3%ABs-islamike/a-3942590>, [18.11.2019]; Details on the visa liberalization agreement between the two countries can be found at this link: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2009/03/20090318-1.htm>, [18.11.2019].

A few months later, Foreign Minister Babacan's stance was emphasized by Koksal Toptan, the speaker of the Turkish parliament, during his visit to Pristina in July 2009. He stressed that during the regular meeting of the Turkish-speaking countries assembly (TURKPA⁵⁹⁹), Turkey would bring the issue of Kosovo's independence to the agenda.⁶⁰⁰

Following the Turkish Parliament Speaker's visit to Kosovo, a month later, Minister of Foreign Affairs Skender Hyseni paid an official visit to Ankara, meeting with the highest state leaders. During the meeting, Hyseni highly praised the role of the Turkish state for continued support for Kosovo. Minister Hyseni also thanked the Turkey's Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin for the support and quick recognition of Kosovo's independence. The purpose of the visit of the Kosovan Foreign Minister has been to urge Turkey to intensify its efforts in encouraging other states to recognize the state of Kosovo, especially amongst the Arab countries.⁶⁰¹

Apart from its active efforts in regional organizations and bilateral meetings with various countries, Turkey also advocated for Kosovo in the UN. In his speech at the 66th UN General Assembly, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that "The road to peace and stability in the Balkans goes through the recognition of Kosovo's independence".⁶⁰²

Turkey's constant and dynamic approach in the international community regarding the Kosovo issue didn't go unnoticed by Albanian leadership. During Albanian president Bamir Topi's official visit to Ankara, he said that "Turkey is strongly lobbying for

⁵⁹⁹ "Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries (TURKPA) was established on November 21, 2008, according to the Agreement signed by the Heads of parliaments of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Turkey in the Dolmabahce Saray located in Istanbul. The initiator of the establishment of this organization was Turkey. On September 29, 2009, the first plenary session of the TURKPA was organized in the capital Azerbaijan, Baku city. The TURKPA Regulations, Articles of Secretariat and Baku Declaration were adopted in this plenary session. The Secretariat of TURKPA is located in the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in Baku and has the status of international organization". For more see: https://www.turkpa.org/en/content/about_turkpa/history, [19.11.2019].

⁶⁰⁰ "Turkey Pledges to Lobby for Kosovo Recognition", **Balkan Insight**, 07.07.2009, <https://balkaninsight.com/2009/07/07/turkey-pledges-to-lobby-for-kosovo-recognition/>, [19.11.2019].

⁶⁰¹ "Hyseni: Turqia Lobon për Kosovën", **Bota Sot**, 28.08.2009, <https://www.botasot.info/?gjuha=0&category=3&id=29173>, [19.11.2019].

⁶⁰² "Statement by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at 66th UN General Assembly by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan", 22.09.2011, <http://www.voltairenet.org/article171548.html>, [19.11.2019].

increasing the number of countries that recognize Kosovo.”⁶⁰³ In bilateral talks, Turkish President Abdullah Gül informed Topi that he had a conversation with Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff regarding Kosovo’s recognition. According to President Topi, Turkey’s authorities have a good position to support new recognitions of Kosovo, and continue to lobby in other countries to recognize the new state.⁶⁰⁴

During the promotion of Ahmet Davutoğlu's book “Civilizations and Cities,” former foreign minister Skender Hyseni spoke about his experience with Turkey, more specifically about Turkey's role in recognizing Kosovo's independence in the international community. He said that:

“If the Republic of Kosovo has been recognized by 116 countries so far, Turkey has had a big role, where I know, but also President Thaci, then Prime Minister, know that the role of Turkey under the leadership of President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu was very important toward recognition of Republic of Kosovo. Our membership in 67 different organizations in the Balkans, Europe and the world has come thanks to Turkey's daily support. We are very grateful in this regard.”⁶⁰⁵

Concrete examples of Turkey's direct involvement in lobbying for Kosovo recognition through the president Erdoğan was the case with Pakistan and Brunei. When Pakistani authorities decided to recognize Kosovo, they communicate the authorities of Kosovo through Turkey about their decision. Brunei also submitted their decision to recognize Kosovo on 25 April, 2012, shortly after the king returned home after a visit to Ankara.⁶⁰⁶

In addition to lobbying in the international community, Turkey has also made its diplomatic service available to Kosovo, meaning that all Turkish embassies are available to Kosovo without any conditions, not just for Kosovo officials but also for their citizens. Relatedly, the Turkish Foreign Ministry cooperated with Kosovo authorities and provided help Kosovo citizens confined in Middle Eastern and North African states during the Arab Spring.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰³ Erisa Dautaj Şenerdem, “Turkey Lobbying Hard for Kosovo, Says Tirana”, **Turkish News**, 12.10.2011, <https://www.turkishnews.com/en/content/2011/10/12/turkey-lobbying-hard-for-kosovo-says-tirana/>, [20.11.2019].

⁶⁰⁴ **Ibid.**

⁶⁰⁵ “Turqia për Njohjen e R. së Kosovës ka Bërë më Shumë se Vetë Shqiptarët”, 17.03.2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hXpynSenX8>, [21.11.2019].

⁶⁰⁶ Kursani, Haxholli, Gjiko, “Kosova në Kontekst Rajonal”, 73.

⁶⁰⁷ **Ibid.**, 74.

Turkey's diplomatic activity toward international recognition of Kosovo wasn't welcomed by Serbia.⁶⁰⁸ After Turkey's initial decision of recognizing Kosovo, Serbia withdrew its ambassador from Ankara. Additionally, Serbia's political and academic circles were critical of Turkey's actions.

During a trilateral summit in Ankara in 2013 between Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić appealed for other states not to lobby for recognition of Kosovo's independence and its membership in international organizations. He also addressed Turkey directly from this summit, stressing that:

“Now we expect from Turkey that Kosovo not to be the subject of Turkish talks with other partners, and I will be completely open because I am among my friends. Turkey and other states should not strive for recognition of Kosovo's independence nor lobby for Kosovo's membership in international organizations.”⁶⁰⁹

One of the most prominent scholars of Turkish foreign policy in Serbia, Darko Tanasković, believes that President Nikolić's statement after the trilateral meeting with the President of Turkey and members of the BiH Presidency in Ankara was “appropriate, well-measured and politically functional”. According to him,

“Finally one president of Serbia pointed out that in case Turkey wants to develop harmonious bilateral and trilateral relations, it must have due respect and the necessary measure of constructive restraint toward vital political interests of Serbia and specifically the issue of Kosovo and Metohija.”⁶¹⁰

It is important, says Professor Tanasković, that such a decisive and serious message was sent publicly from the top, which cannot be neglected, neither in the field of bilateral and regional relations nor in the international community, and this long-awaited clarity in the

⁶⁰⁸ It is worth noting that even before Kosovo declared independence, Serbian leadership was active in preventing this step. The visit of Serbian President Boris Tadić to Ankara in 2007 is the greatest evidence of this approach. During meetings with Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül, Tadić has urged Turkey to have a neutral approach to the Kosovo issue. According to the Serbian president, this is the most appropriate position to maintain this very positive climate of bilateral relations between Serbia and Turkey. Emre Kızılkaya, “Türkiye bizi anlamalı”, **Hürriyet**, 01.12.2007, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-bizi-anlamali-7792619>, [20.12.2019]; “Sırbistan'dan Türkiye'ye Kosova eleştirisi”, **CNN Türk**, 29.11.2007, <https://www.cnnturk.com/2007/turkiye/11/29/sirbistandan.turkiyeye.kosova.elestirisi/408130.0/index.html> ö [20.12.2019].

⁶⁰⁹ “Трилатерални Самит у Анкари: Николић позвао Турску да не Лобира за Косово”, **Radio Televizije Vojvodine**, 15.05.2015, http://rtv.rs/sr_lat/politika/trilateralni-samit-u-ankari-nikolic-pozvao-tursku-da-ne-lobira-za-kosovo_392369.html, [21.11.2019].

⁶¹⁰ Biljana Baković, “Николић у Анкари као Меркелова у Београду”, **Politika**, 17.05.2013, <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/258031/Николић-у-Анкари-као-Меркелова-у-Београду#!>, [22.11.2019].

communication of political message from Serbia will be more than welcomed at home.⁶¹¹

Aleksandra Joksimović, President of the Center for Foreign Policy, sees Nikolić's comment as a reminder of Turkey and Serbia's inability to find a common language around Kosovo. She also said that:

“Given the number of countries that have recognized Kosovo's independence, and with whom Serbia is cooperating very well on other topics, it seems that this is no longer one of the topics that critically determine Serbia's relations with other countries.”⁶¹²

Joksimović emphasized that at the level of international organizations, roles have long been divided - there are promoters of Kosovo's independence who are actively working on a broad consensus on the recognition of Kosovo, and Turkey is one of the countries participating in this process in a certain way.⁶¹³

Serbia's reactions to Turkish policy on Kosovo have not stopped during the following period. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in his closing speech at the 13th Organization for Islamic Cooperation summit, criticized Islamic states for not recognizing Kosovo's independence. Erdoğan said he could not understand the justifications of some of the OIC countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo, and that such approaches were of concern. He also declared that Islamic states that have not recognized Kosovo must take swift diplomatic steps to recognize this country.⁶¹⁴

Erdoğan's statement did not pass without reaction from Serbia. According to the Serbian daily newspaper Politika, Erdoğan's speech served as the occasion to invite Turkish Ambassador to Belgrade Mehmet Kemal Bozaj to Serbia's Foreign Ministry, where Belgrade verbally protested over the ongoing rhetoric of the Turkish president.⁶¹⁵ Former Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, Vladislav Jovanović, said that “Pushing the

⁶¹¹ **Ibid.**

⁶¹² **Ibid.**

⁶¹³ **Ibid.**

⁶¹⁴ “Çfarë u Thotë Erdogan Shteteve Islamike që nuk e Kanë Pranuar Kosovën?”, **Klan Kosova**, 17.04.2016, <https://klankosova.tv/cfare-u-thote-erdogan-shteteve-islamike-qe-nuk-e-kane-pranuar-kosoven-video/>, [22.11.2019]; “Rexhep Tajip Erdogan, Godet Shtetet Islame për Mosnjohjen e Pavarësise së Kosovës”, 15.04.2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7S-cuRDEh8>, [22.11.2019].

⁶¹⁵ Jelena Cerovina, “Islamske Zemlje ne Slušaju Erdogana Oko Kosova”, **Politika**, 02.05.2016, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/354093/Islamske-zemlje-ne-slusaju-Erdogana-oko-Kosova>, [21.11.2019].

story of Kosovo's independence by Erdoğan only ignites the fire under his feet, because he has a far greater problem with the Kurds than we do with the Albanians.”⁶¹⁶

Darko Tanasković in the capacity of Serbian ambassador to UNESCO comment Turkey's approach as one of the most aggressive countries that is lobbying for Kosovo membership in UNESCO. Tanasković says that in the international community, Turkish diplomacy has bilaterally and multilaterally advocated for Kosovo's international legal subjectivity. Turkey has been at the forefront of lobbying for Kosovo's membership in UNESCO. In 2015, Albania also proposed for Kosovo to be accepted into this specialized UN organization for education, science and culture. Turkish diplomats became involved in this effort to secure the necessary number of votes for Kosovo. According to Tanasković, officials in Ankara continue to support Kosovo even today, which is integral part of Neo-Ottomanist foreign policy doctrine.⁶¹⁷

Despite Serbia's critical approach, Turkey has not moved from its position on the issue of Kosovo's independence. In this respect, the logical question would be what were the reasons for the Turkish leadership for this approach? Despite that in the 1990s, Turkey had formerly been a signatory to the preservation of the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, based on inconsistent principles of the UN charter and OSCE documents, this approach began to change when Turkey decided to have a more active presence in NATO military operations in Kosovo through the final phase that was the recognition of Kosovo's independence.⁶¹⁸

One of the first factors for supporting Kosovo's independence would be Turkey's alignment with the western states, with particular emphasis on the USA. The majority of western community supported Kosovo's independence and in its of its continued western orientation Turkey also felt “obliged” to join the western states, actively participating in USA-led war and USA recognition of Kosovo's independence. This decision was not

⁶¹⁶ **Ibid.**

⁶¹⁷ “Professor Darko Tanasković: I am Not Fond of the Demarcation Idea”, **Diplomacy & Commerce**, 15.11.2019, <http://www.diplomacyandcommerce.rs/professor-darko-tanaskovic-i-am-not-fond-of-the-demarcation-idea/>, [05.12.2019].

⁶¹⁸ Enika Abazi, “A New Power Play in the Balkans: Kosovo's Independence”, **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2008): 76.

just a tool to strengthen Turkey's position in the western world, but also an important part of its security policy and culture.⁶¹⁹

The second factor relates to Turkey's domestic politics, namely the attitudes of political parties. It is also worth noting that in the period when the state of Turkey was distancing herself for the recognition of Kosovo, the opposition political parties, whether left or right, were of the opinion that Turkey should recognize Kosovo's independence. This implies that since the 1990s, the option of independence has been included as a topic in Turkish politics.⁶²⁰ Another important factor for Turkey has to do with geopolitical, cultural, historical, as well as demographic considerations. With the independence of Kosovo, Turkey appreciates the pivotal role of the Albanian factor in the Balkans. On the other hand, the new reality with Kosovo could strengthen Turkey's position in the Balkan region.⁶²¹ This fact is probably related to Davutoğlu's stances, which in the Strategic Depth emphasize that Turkey should focus on realizing its own foreign policy objectives in the Balkans, namely Bosnia and Albania's empowerment and stability. The fact that these two groups have achieved the objective of strengthening their position as independent nation states represents an opportunity for Turkey to further strengthen its impact in the Balkans. In this context, providing support the Muslim communities in the Balkan region is the must for Turkey to achieve her foreign policy objectives.⁶²²

This implies that since Turkey claims to be a regional power, cooperation with these groups is essential. In this context, it becomes meaningful for Turkey to recognize Kosovo, which has the potential to benefit as a regional partner. With the emergence of Kosovo as an independent state, a new Muslim state has emerged in Europe which more than 90 percent of its population belong to the religion of Islam.⁶²³ Another important factor that has determined Turkey's foreign policy on this issue has to do with the presence of the Turkish minority in Kosovo. Turkey's post-2000 policies towards Kosovo were focused to the Turkish minorities in Kosovo and protection of their

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶²⁰ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası", 69.

⁶²¹ Bekim Sejdiu, "Rethinking the Relations Between Turkey and Kosovo: Between Facts and Emotions", **Threats and Challenges to Kosovo's Sovereignty**, ed. David L. Phillips, Lulzim Peci (New York: Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University, 2018): 101-115.

⁶²² Davutoğlu, *The Illusion of Strategy*, 161.

⁶²³ Demirtaş Coşkun, "Kosova'nın Bağımsızlığı ve Türk Dış Politikası", 73.

rights.⁶²⁴ Moreover, with independence, it was thought that an appropriate environment would be created to solve the problems of the Turkish minority in Kosovo, which already supported the independence of Kosovo.⁶²⁵

3.2. Neo-Ottomanist Vision as a Guide for Turkey in the Western Balkans, under Ahmet Davutoğlu as Minister for Foreign Affairs

The year of 2002 was a period when Turkey entered in significant political change. In the 15th Turkish general election held on November 2002, Justice and Development Party (JDP) won the election with nearly two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. From these elections, JDP emerged as the only winning party to form the government and put an end to the coalition governments that characterized the 1990s. Since 2002 JDP has been able to impose a different economic and political approach compared to coalition governments. This new approach, after eight years made Turkey in 2010 to be ranked as the 16th country with the most developed economy in the world and rising annual per capita income. Thanks to its economic success and political stability, Turkey gained confidence in foreign policy during this period. Additionally, Turkey, which has historical and geographical relations with its close regions such as the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus, began pursuing an active foreign policy aiming to contribute to peace and stability around its near-land basin.⁶²⁶

The first phase of the JDP's governance was termed as a “Process of Europeanisation”, which meant the process of adopting EU regulations and institutional structures to the domestic level, in which Turkey approached EU membership prospects with an adoption of series of political reforms from 1999 to 2005.⁶²⁷ Turkey's Euro-integration ambitions are not a novelty of JDP, they stem from the efforts of previous governments, but this

⁶²⁴ Ogulturk, “Turkey's Balkan Policy after the Cold War”, 306.

⁶²⁵ Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, 704.

⁶²⁶ Erhan Türbedar, “Politika e Turqisë në Ballkan që nga Viti 2000 e Deri më Sot”, **Gazeta e Re**, 24.04.2018, <https://www.gazetaere.com/koment-politika-e-turqise-ne-ballkan-qe-nga-viti-2000-e-deri-me-sot/>, [30.12.2019].

⁶²⁷ Özlem Terzi, “Europeanisation of Foreign Policy and Candidate Countries : a Comparative Study of Greek and Turkish cases”, **Politique Européenne**, No. 1 (2005): 114.

phase has been more dynamic and circumstances have allowed for a such an approach, in which Turkey started accession negotiations in 2005.

But, out of the 35 chapters for Turkish accession in the EU, only chapter 25 pertaining to Science and Research has been closed since 2005, eight chapters were blocked by the EU in 2006, as a result of non-realization of the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement for Cyprus. In 2007, five chapters were blocked by a French veto. Cyprus was another country that unilaterally vetoed additional six chapters. Decisions by EU member states to block negotiating chapters fade away Turkey's ambitions for the European integration process. This new momentum from 2005 until 2010 could be labeled as a transition period from Europeanization to de-Europeanization of Turkey. According to Turkey's leadership the EU does not have the luxury of seeking additional criteria other than those of Copenhagen and that Turkey will not accept additional criterias imposed by certain states of EU.⁶²⁸

Given such circumstances, Turkish leadership seems to have seen the right momentum to pursue an independent foreign policy, especially in its close regions. The booster of this approach is considered to be Ahmet Davutoğlu. First as advisor to the Turkish prime minister and then as foreign minister, sought to enlive this project. During his inauguration as foreign minister in 2009 Davutoğlu stated that:

“Turkey now has a vision of its own. When it comes to the Middle East, there is a Turkish vision. The same goes for the Balkans and Caucasus. Turkey is not a country that responds to crises, but is able to intervene effectively and create order that provides peace, prosperity and stability.”⁶²⁹

According to him balance between freedom and security, zero problems with neighbors, more active role in the close regions are key pillars that should be taken into consideration for a successful foreign policy.⁶³⁰ Additionally, Davutoğlu in his inauguration as foreign minister emphasized that foreign policy is no longer just a field of diplomacy. Foreign policy is now measured by a foreign policy performance that encompasses all areas of diplomacy, economy, energy, and culture. In this sense,

⁶²⁸ Buket Ökten Sipahioğlu, “Shifting From Europeanization to De-Europeanization in Turkey: How AKP Instrumentalized EU Negotiations”, **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Vol. 48 (2017): 56.

⁶²⁹ “Devlet Bakanı ve Başbakan Yardımcısı Sayın Ali Babacan ile Dışışleri Bakanı Sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Devir Teslim Vesilesiyle Yaptıkları Konuşmaları”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, 02.05.2009, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/devlet-bakani-ve-basabakan-yardimcisi-sayin-ali-babacan-ile-disisleri-bakani-sayin-ahmet-davutoglu_nun-devir-teslim-vesilesiyle.tr.mfa, [02.01.2019].

⁶³⁰ **Ibid.**

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to maintain close cooperation with all other ministries and institutions in order to protect national interests.⁶³¹

Since his first appearance as foreign minister, diplomatic and academic circles have named Davutoğlu's discourse as Neo-Ottomanist. In an affirmative context, the term describes a foreign policy that derives from her legitimacy as a longtime imperial power in her close regions. At its worst, this term suggests hegemonic ulterior motives behind Turkey's new activism.⁶³² The dilemmas over the Neo Ottoman discourse grew even more after Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo, which we will elaborate later in the thesis.

Prior to Davutoğlu's arrival as Foreign Minister, three important developments took place in the Balkan region where Turkish diplomacy had her presence. First, when inther-ethnic conflict began in Macedonia in 2001, Turkey did not remain indifferent and maintained a supportive stance on the country's territorial integrity. The second concerns the Euro-Atlantic process of the Western Balkans. In all bilateral and multilateral meetings, Turkey has consistently emphasized unreserved support for Euro-Atlantic integration of thi countries. And the third issue has to do with Kosovo's status. When Kosovo declared independence Turkey was among the first countries to recognize her independence. From the war in Kosovo until its independence, Turkey was on the same line with the most important countries of the western community such as the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, etc.⁶³³

Since 2009, as Davutoğlu said at the first press conference as foreign minister that Turkey will not limited its foreign policy in the Balkans to the context of bilateral relations. On the contrary, Turkey took an active approach in developing relations with Serbia, took the responsability of mediator between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkish businesses increasingly invested in the Balkan countries as well organizations supported by the Turkish state had a very active approach in this region. TIKa, Yunus Emre, Diyanet and YTB with the development of various projects enabled the citizens of this region to have a closer interaction with Turkey.

⁶³¹ **Ibid.**

⁶³² Schleifer, "Turkey's Neo-Ottoman Problem", [23.11.2019].

⁶³³ Türbedar, "Politika e Turqisë në Ballkan ", [30.12.2019].

3.2.1. Rapprochement of Bilateral Relations Between Serbia and Turkey after 20 years

Throughout history relations between Serbia and Turkey have had its ups and downs. Since the field of interest of this study is the Post-Cold War period, it can be said that from the 1990s until 2009 the relations between these two countries were not at their proper level. During the conflicts in the Balkans, Serbia and Turkey were in opposite sides more exactly Turkey lined up with the international community for the prevention of humanitarian disaster both in BiH and Kosovo. In the Kosovo war, Turkey has been one of the states that took an active part in the NATO bombing of Serbia in order to put an end to Serbian aggression against the Kosovo Albanians. While in the 2000s, respectively in 2008, one more issue put these two countries to different sides. The independence of Kosovo in 2008 and her recognition by Turkey caused great dissatisfaction within Serbian leadership. As a result of this action, Serbia withdrew its ambassador from Ankara. However, given the real situation in Kosovo where a large number of international community states recognized its independence, the Serbian leadership seemed to reflect and later decided to normalize relations with states that recognized Kosovo's independence. Among these countries was Turkey.

October 2009 was the turning point in the relations between Serbia and Turkey when Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Serbia. After 23 years, Gül was the first Turkish president that visited Serbia.⁶³⁴ This visit is considered to be the key moment in the bilateral relations between Serbia and Turkey. In this historical visit Turkish President Gül was accompanied by State Minister Faruk Çelik, Labor and Social policy Minister Ömer Dinçer, General Presidential Secretary Mustafa Isen and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Feridun Sinirlioğlu. Along with the state delegation, a delegation of businessmen from Turkey interested in investing in Serbia also were part

⁶³⁴ Before Abdullah Gül, on October 21, 1986 President Kenan Evren accompanied by Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu paid an official visit in Belgrade. Whereas Sinan Hasani, who was the President of the presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, hosted the Turkish delegation. For more see: <https://www.cumhuriyetarsivi.com/katalog/192/sayfa/1986/10/21.xhtml>

of this visit.⁶³⁵ As a host, Serbian delegation was consisted by president Boris Tadić, Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić, Minister of Defense Dragan Šutanovac, Minister of Economy Mlađan Dinkić and Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Rasim Ljajić.⁶³⁶

After the official reception and meeting of the delegations, were signed several agreements such as Economic Cooperation Agreement on the establishment of a Joint Economic Council between two countries, Cooperation Agreement on Transport Infrastructure, Social Security Agreement and Cooperation Agreement on Technical and Financial Matters. Signatories of the agreements on behalf of Turkey were State Minister Faruk Çelik and Labor and Social Policy Minister Ömer Dinçer. While on behalf of Serbia were Minister of Economy and Regional Development Mlađan Dinkić, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić and Minister of Labor and Social Policy Rasim Ljajić.⁶³⁷

After signing the agreements, at the press conference Serbian president Boris Tadić stated that, “In the past we have many disagreements, but we wish to see our future in understanding and friendship. Turkey and Serbia are indispensable factors in resolving all issues of interest to the region”. Tadić also said that Turkey's recognition of Kosovo's unilateral independence should not disrupt and collapse the relations between Belgrade and Ankara. He also said that two countries support each other in the European integration process.⁶³⁸

While Turkish President Gül expressed his gratitude to his counterpart Tadić for the invitation and the hospitality shown to the Turkish delegation. Gül stressed that his long-standing friendship with Tadić⁶³⁹ has greatly contributed to the development of relations

⁶³⁵ “23 Yıl Aradan Sonra Sırbistan'a İlk Resmi Ziyaret”, **CNN Turk**, 26.10.2009, <https://www.cnnturk.com/2009/dunya/10/26/23.yil.aradan.sonra.sirbistana.ilk.resmi.ziyaret/549265.0/index.html> [06.01.2020].

⁶³⁶ “Turski Predsjednik u Beogradu”, **RTRS**, 26.10.2009, <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=11024>, [06.01.2020].

⁶³⁷ Iva Martinović, “Tadić i Gul: Naši Odnosi Nikad Bolji”, 26.10.2009, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/abdulah_gul_poseta_srbija/1860804.html, [07.01.2020].

⁶³⁸ “Tadić i Gul: Nove Mogućnosti za Saradnju Srbije i Turske”, 26.10.2009, http://www.rtv.rs/sk/politika/tadic-i-gul-nove-mogucnosti-za-saradnju-srbije-i-turske_154431.html, [07.01.2020].

⁶³⁹ Evidence of good friendly relations between the Turkish leadership and President Tadić are the 2008 elections in Serbia. In an effort to form the government, Boris Tadić needed five more votes, while the Sandžak Bosniak party had 6 deputies, who were crucial in forming the government. Having in mind excellent relations with the Sandžak Bosniaks, Turkey directly influenced them, and an agreement was reached in which Sulejman Ugljanin would be minister in the new government. In this context, Turkey for

between the two countries in mutual trust and friendship. Gül said that perhaps the two states do not have a common crossing point border, but there is a neighborhood sentiment, noting that two countries have common things and similar culture, and that the word "ortak" is the best argument of what he says. Additionally Gül explained that two delegations discussed many issues in a broad and sincere manner and appreciated Tadić's vision and strategy for Serbia and the whole region.⁶⁴⁰ Lastly Gül added that:

"I strongly believe that this attitude for peace, stability, economic development and prosperity will contribute to Serbia, to the whole region and our bilateral relations. The relations between Turkey and Serbia at a point of strategic relations has historic importance, and this moment has important meaning. I have to say that I'm very proud of that. As far as Turkey and Serbia will be in a close cooperational relationship, as far as both states support policies that are in the same direction, in the Balkans and beyond will dominate peace and security."⁶⁴¹

Regarding Turkey's position on Kosovo independence Gül in an interview for the the Daily Danas emphasized that Turkey's recognition of Kosovo's independence was not a decision directed against Serbia. According to him, Turkey always had strong and special relations with the people of Kosovo, whose independence came as a result of a long-term engagement by the international community. Gül estimates that this decision should not represent an obstacle to the development of mutual relations.⁶⁴²

During this visit, Tadić and Gül attended in the Serbia-Turkey Business Forum. Around 40 businessmen from Turkish companies participated in this council. According to Serbian Chamber of Commerce, in the forum attended businessmen from leading Turkish companies in the field of construction, textile, tourism and other areas.⁶⁴³ Addressing Turkish businessmen, Tadić stressed that investments in Serbia will bring special benefits because of geographical location or more exactly as a result of the corridor 10 and increasing infrastructure facilities for doing business. Whereas Gül

the first time had an influence in Serbian politics. İlhan Uzel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler" **Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt III:2001-2012**, ed. Baskin Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2013): 706.

⁶⁴⁰ "Cumhurbaşkanı Abdullah Gül, Belgrad'da", **Milliyet**, 26.10.2009, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/cumhurbaskani-abdullah-gul-belgrad-da-1154798>, [07.01.2020].

⁶⁴¹ **Ibid.**

⁶⁴² Bojana Barlovac, "Turkey, Serbia to Strengthen Relations", **Balkan Insight**, 26.10.2009, <https://balkaninsight.com/2009/10/26/turkey-serbia-to-strengthen-relations/>, [07.01.2020].

⁶⁴³ "Turski Predsjednik u Beogradu", **RTRS**, 26.10.2009, <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=11024>, [08.01.2020].

suggested to Turkish investors to attach great importance to Serbia because this country will have a bright future.⁶⁴⁴ Additionally he said that:

”In fact, Serbia is the key country in the Balkans. The highways that will pass through Serbia will connect all Balkan countries, and this will make relations to be much stronger in every perspective. For this reason i brought Turkish companies that have specialization in this field. And It is not just highways, there are companies that work in organized industrial zones, expansion of airports, military airports and so on. We will be very happy to share all this together and I believe that there will be concrete developments in this regard.”⁶⁴⁵

In the context of the economic field, another meeting was held under the motto “Economic Development of the Sandžak Region” where the main objective was to work on joint projects of Turkey and Serbia aiming to develop Sandžak.⁶⁴⁶

In terms of trade volume the president of Serbian Chamber of Commerce (SCC) Miloš Bugarin emphasized that trade volume between Turkey and Serbia has been continuously increasing over the past eight years and amounted about \$ 480 million in 2008, 6.6 times more than 2000. Bugarin’s prediction was that Free Trade Agreement with Turkey will create great potential for intensifying economic cooperation and enhancing foreign trade. Following the implementation of the agreement, Bugarin’s expectation was that influx of Turkish investments into Serbia would be significantly higher, especially in the areas of construction, mechanical engineering and production of auto parts.⁶⁴⁷

This official visit of Turkish President is considered to be turning point not only in context of relations between two countries that later culminated with widening range of cooperation in the political, economic, cultural and educational field but also was a turning point in working towards stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. To achieve this goal, Serbian President Tadić emphasized that active presence of Turkey and Serbia in the region is indispensable. He also points out that if Serbia wants to expand its influence in the region, it can only do so if it establishes a

⁶⁴⁴ “Gul Calls on Turkish Businessmen to Invest more in Serbia”, **World Bulletin**, 27.10.2009, <https://www.worldbulletin.net/archive/gul-calls-on-turkish-businessmen-to-invest-more-in-serbia-h49056.html>, [08.10.2009].

⁶⁴⁵ “Sırbistan Cumhurbaşkanı Boris Tadić ile Birlikte Düzenledikleri Basın Toplantısında Yaptıkları Açıklama”, 26.10.2009, <http://www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/aciklamalar/252/69236/sirbistan-cumhurbaskani-boris-tadic-ile-birlikte-duzenledikleri-basin-toplantisinda-yaptiklari-acikl.html>, [08.01.2020].

⁶⁴⁶ “Gül, Sırbistan’da”, **Cumhuriyet**, 27.10.2009, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/95542/Gul_Sirbistan_da.html, [08.01.2020].

⁶⁴⁷ “Tadić i Gul: Nove Mogućnosti za Saradnju Srbije i Turske”, **Radio Televizija Vojvodina**, 26.10.2009, http://www.rtv.rs/sk/politika/tadic-i-gul-nove-mogucnosti-za-saradnju-srbije-i-turske_154431.html, [07.01.2020].

strategic relationship with Turkey. Turkey's president was in the same opinion, stressing that Turko-Serbian co-operation will naturally solve many problems in the Balkans. Both sides require this strategic cooperation. In terms of strategic cooperation, one of the priority issues will have to be Bosnia's territorial integrity, where both presidents have given strong support.⁶⁴⁸

3.2.2. Turkey's Initiating Role in the Process of Mediation between Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia and the Istanbul Declaration

If two countries want to overcome the differences from the past and build a promising future, good will is a necessary condition for achieving this goal. Regarding the relations between Serbia and Turkey, the signals for the existence of good will were expressed.

President Gül 's visit to Belgrade, as pointed out earlier, was a decisive moment in the beginning of building stable relations between two countries. Within the political context, one of the main issues that concerned both states was the issue of BiH. The statements of Gül and Tadić in Belgrade were in the direction that sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a precondition for a stable and prosperous Balkan. Taking into consideration this discourse as well as the positive atmosphere and the will for positive changes with closing the crises from the past, Turkish diplomacy seems to have noticed this momentum and decided to take concrete actions on the ground.

One of the first initiatives that Turkish diplomacy took in this direction was to influence toward Serbian leadership for the adoption by the Serbian parliament the “Declaration of Srebrenica”. On March 31, 2010, the People’s Assembly (Parliament) of the Republic of Serbia in a debate lasting around twelve-hours, adopted the Declaration on the Condemnation of the Crime in Srebrenica with 127 pro votes and 21 against.⁶⁴⁹ In the declaration was condemning the massacre of around 8000 Muslim Bosnians that were killed by Bosnian Serb forces and Serbian paramilitaries in July 1995. This massacre is

⁶⁴⁸ Kadri Gürsel, “Stratejik Ortak Sırbistan”, **Milliyet**, 29.10.2009, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/kadri-gursel/stratejik-ortak-sirbistan-1155766>, [09.01.2020].

⁶⁴⁹ “Declaration on Srebrenica”, **Peščanik**, 01.04.2010, <https://pescanik.net/declaration-on-srebrenica/>, <https://pescanik.net/declaration-on-srebrenica/>, [09.01.2020].

considered as one of the worst crimes of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. This massacre was judged by international justice institutions as genocide.⁶⁵⁰

The four articles of the Srebrenica declaration adopted by the Serbian parliament include that :

“1. The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia most severely condemns the crime committed against the Bosniak population in Srebrenica in July 1995 in the manner established by the ruling of the International Court of Justice, as well as all the social and political processes and incidents that led to the creation of awareness that the realisation of personal national goals can be reached through the use of armed force and physical violence against members of other nations and religions, extending on the occasion condolences and apologies to the families of the victims that everything possible had not been done to prevent the tragedy.

2. The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia provides full support to the work of the state authorities in charge of processing war criminals and successful completion of the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in which the detection and arrest of Ratko Mladic for the purpose of standing trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is particularly significant.

3. The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia calls upon all the former conflicting sides in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the other states of the former Yugoslavia, to continue the process of reconciliation and strengthening of the conditions for common life based on national equality and full observance of human and minority rights and freedoms so that the committed crimes would never be repeated.

4. The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia expresses the expectation that the highest authorities of other states on the territory of the former Yugoslavia would also condemn the crimes committed against the members of the Serbian people in this manner, as well as extend condolences and apologies to the families of the Serbian victims.”⁶⁵¹

According to media sources, the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was the key person who has influenced and helped to prepare the “Declaration of Srebrenica”. The role of Turkey as mediator between the parties have been complicated having in mind that on one side were Bosnians a predominantly Muslim country like Turkey, and in another part Serbia as an Orthodox Christian nation with which Turkey in the past on many issues had opposite positions. In these circumstances gaining the confidence by the parties towards Turkey was determinant. Although neither Serbia nor BiH have a common border with Turkey, Davutoğlu defined his neighborhood expansively, in which Balkans are defined as Turkey's near-land basin.⁶⁵²

⁶⁵⁰ Jasna Dragović-Soso, “Apologising for Srebrenica: The Declaration of the Serbian Parliament, the European Union and the Politics of Compromise”, **East European Politics**, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June 2012): 165.

⁶⁵¹ This declaration is to be published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia. RS no. 6, Belgrade, 31 March 2010. “Srebrenica Genocide Blog”, <http://srebrenica-genocide.blogspot.com/2010/04/text-of-declaration-on-srebrenica.html> , [08.01.2020].

⁶⁵² James Traub, “Turkey’s Rules”, **TheNew York Times**, 20.01.2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/23/magazine/23davutoglu-t.html>, [09.01.2020].

To achieve the compromise Davutoğlu in a short time traveled several times to Belgrade and Sarajevo. He also helped negotiate acceptable names of diplomats in both countries. After this BiH agreed finally to name an ambassador to Serbia. Concerning the agreement during an interview with journalist James Traub, Davutoğlu said that “To seal the deal I met late one night at the Sarajevo airport with the Bosnian leader Haris Silajdžić. Silajdžić smoked furiously. For the first time I made an exception, I smoked too. Finally Silajdžić accepted the Serbian apology. Crisis was averted”, said Davutoğlu.⁶⁵³

Serbian President Boris Tadić welcomed the decision of Serbian parliament on “Srebrenica Declaration” and described it as a historic declaration.⁶⁵⁴ According to Tadić:

“The declaration is the product that shows Serbia's absolute dedication to restore trust and promote friendship and understanding between two proud nations in our region and more broadly, two great religious traditions present throughout our increasingly interdependent world.”⁶⁵⁵

Additionally Tadić qualified this document as the unique example in the Western Balkans that extends deep condolences and express sincere apologies to the families of the Bosnian Muslim victims..⁶⁵⁶

It is noteworthy that also in the past in Serbia has been debated over adopting a statement on the Srebrenica massacres but has not been reached. The fact that one of the suggestions or “conditions” by European Union towards Serbia was to make such a decision, Serbia had no other option to avoid this “suggestion” except to fulfill it. That is to say, this decision it also has to do with political opportunism, namely the need to substantiate Serbia's bid for EU membership candidate status. It should also be

⁶⁵³ “Davutoğlu' nun bir 'Bosnalı Gibi Sigara İçtiği' An”, **Cumhuriyet**, 21.01.2011, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/215304/Davutoglu_nun_bir_Bosnali_gibi_sigara_ictigi_an.html, [09.01.2020].

⁶⁵⁴ “‘An Apology for Srebrenica’ by Boris Tadic, published in The Wall Street Journal”, **Tportal**, 17.04.2010, <https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/an-apology-for-srebrenica-by-boris-tadic-published-in-the-wall-street-journal-20100417/print>, [25.04.2020].

⁶⁵⁵ Boris Tadić, “An Apology for Srebrenica”, 16.04.2010, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303695604575182284149946008>, [10.01.2020].

⁶⁵⁶ **Ibid.**

emphasized that the statement condemns the massacre, but nowhere the word genocide is mentioned.⁶⁵⁷

US State Department welcomed the adoption of the Srebrenica Declaration by the Serbian Parliament, assessing it as a positive step towards reconciliation in the region. State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner has stated that, “USA welcome the Declaration adopted on March 30 at the Serbian Parliament condemning the 1995 Srebrenica massacre as a positive step towards reconciliation, dealing with past crimes, fostering regional cooperation and improving stability in the region.”⁶⁵⁸

Turkey welcomed the adoption of the declaration in the Serbian Parliament. Through an statement, Turkey's Foreign Ministry stressed that this is an important step in the reconciliation process between the two former Yugoslav republics. According to the statement, Turkey welcomes the decision of the Serbian parliament as a important step towards reconciliation between the people of BiH and Serbia. In the statement also was emphasized Turkey's readiness to give support to the two states in their efforts to normalize the relations through bilateral and multilateral platforms.⁶⁵⁹

Also Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu who according to Serbian media has the merits in influencing for the initiating of the adoption of the Srebrenica declaration which has been ignored for years⁶⁶⁰ said that decision done by Serbian Parliament regarding “Srebrenica massacre”, was an important decision for the peace and stability in Balkans. Additionally Davutoğlu emphasized that Turkey undertook a very active role in the Balkans in the last 6-7 months. He added that Turkey's Balkans policy was focused on security for all countries, sustainability of high-level dialogue, increasing

⁶⁵⁷ Jërg Brandscheid, Elert Ajazaj, “Serbia Kërkon Falje për Srebrenicën”, **Deutsche Welle**, 31.03.2010, <https://www.dw.com/sq/serbia-k%C3%ABrkon-falje-p%C3%ABr-srebrenic%C3%ABn/a-5417124>, [10.01.2020].

⁶⁵⁸ “SAD: Deklaracija Pozitivan Korak”, **RTS**, 01.04.2010, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/604591/sad-deklaracija-pozitivan-korak.html>, [10.01.2020].

⁶⁵⁹ “Turska Pozdravila Usvajanje Deklaracije o Srebrenici”, **Bosnjaci**, 01.04.2010, <http://bosnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=37240>, [10.01.2020].

⁶⁶⁰ Mirha Dedic, “Kako Izgovoriti Genocid”, **Camo**, http://www.camo.ch/kako_izgovoriti_genocid.htm?fbclid=IwAR3l7gzp8DY1xJWHIUaZP7MxIWfflULtkj4C7wxDTQPhAQpHbLfBl1E_yA, [25.04.2020].

economic development and preserving cultural pluralism. According to him stability of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the determinant element for the stability of Balkans.⁶⁶¹

In this period Turkish diplomacy took an active role parallelly on several occasions. It seemed that the goal was to placement Turkey as a mediator in the region with less consultation with the transatlantic partners. The Butmir negotiations process led by the USA and the EU regarding constitutional reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina failed in having positive outcome. Turkey was left out from the Butmir process despite her requests to be a part of it. But, after the failure of Butmir process, Turkey was motivated to pursue its own diplomacy among the stakeholders. As a result of the establishment of positive relations with the Balkan countries, Turkey initiated two trilateral consultation mechanisms, one with Bosnia and Serbia and another with Bosnia and Croatia, without any coordination with the EU or NATO.⁶⁶²

Since October 2009 Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has started the process of trilateral talks between Turkey, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two months later, in December 2009 a foreign ministers consultative mechanism was established between Turkey, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way Turkey as a initiator and mediator of this platform ensured that negotiation process is flowing properly. This initiative provided some productive results. Among them foreign ministers of Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia agreed on an “Action Plan” aimed at rebuilding Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was also decided that within the “Bosnia and Herzegovina Friends” Slovenia within the EU would continue to advocate and support Bosnia towards EU membership while in NATO Turkey would assume this task.⁶⁶³ With this cooperation Turkey and other parties involved in the process aimed, “enhancing peace, stability and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the one hand and transforming the whole Balkan region to a more stable place.”⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶¹ “Turkey Welcomes Serbia 'Apology' for Srebrenica Massacre”, **World Bulletin**, 02.04.2020, <https://www.worldbulletin.net/diplomacy/turkey-welcomes-serbia-apology-for-srebrenica-massacre-h56394.html>, [10.01.2020].

⁶⁶² Oya Dursun-Özkanca, **Turkey–West Relations: The Politics of Intra-alliance Opposition** (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 45.

⁶⁶³ İlhan Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler- Cilt III”, 699.

⁶⁶⁴ “Relations with the Balkan Region”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa>, [11.01.2020].

The culmination of Turkey's diplomatic effort was the adoption of the “Istanbul Declaration” in 2010. The presidents of Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Boris Tadić, Abdullah Gül and Haris Siljadžic, agreed in Istanbul that regional policy in the future should be based on ensuring security, ongoing political dialogue and preserving the multi-ethnic, multicultural and multiverse characteristics of the region. This was highlighted in a joint declaration⁶⁶⁵ adopted at the Istanbul Summit, which observers consider as a milestone.⁶⁶⁶

Serbian President Boris Tadić evaluated the trilateral meeting as a “new beginning in relations among the three countries that have common interests, including joint entry into the European Union”.⁶⁶⁷ Regarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH, Tadić stated that Serbia will not take any action towards destabilizing and putting into question the Bosnian borders. Tadić emphasized that his country is ready to take responsibility for the new beginning of relations between the three countries stressing that Belgrade has contributed to reconciliation, respect for equal rights, mutual respect and the fight for justice. In this regard Serbia supports BiH on its path to the EU and congratulates it on receiving an Action Plan for NATO membership. Lastly he considers that, “After years of misunderstanding, wars of severe and devastation, we have the opportunity to work on building not only trust but also communication and building economic potential for our joint cooperation”.⁶⁶⁸ Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency Chairman Haris Siljadžić responded positively to Tadić's words saying that “It brings peace and serenity to our hearts”. Siljadžić additionally emphasized that “If we have good intentions, if we respect each other, it is certain that we will have success”.⁶⁶⁹ Also It should be mentioned that for the first time, Tadić and Silajdzic exchanged views on open issues that hinder the relations between the two countries.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁵ The full text of the declaration you can find here <http://www.nspm.rs/nspm-in-english/istanbul-declaration.html>

⁶⁶⁶ “Usvojena “Istanbulska deklaracija”, **Vesti Online**, 24.04.2010, <https://arhiva.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Tema-dana/47736/Usvojena-Istanbulska-deklaracija>, [11.01.2020].

⁶⁶⁷ “Trilateralni Sastanak u Istanbulu”, **RTS**, 24.04.2010, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Srbija/652211/Trilateralni+sastanak+u+Istanbulu.html>, [11.01.2020].

⁶⁶⁸ “Turski Most Između Srbije i BiH”, **Deutsche Welle**, 25.04.2010, <https://www.dw.com/sr/turski-most-izme%C4%91u-srbije-i-bih/a-5503603-0>, [11.01.2020].

⁶⁶⁹ **Ibid.**

⁶⁷⁰ **Ibid.**

Whereas, President Abdullah Gül as the host of the summit emphasized that, “This summit passed in a very positive atmosphere in which parties pledged to work for providing and establishing peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkans. I am very pleased with this”. According to Gül “This meeting is of great importance in many aspects. Mr. Siljadžić and Mr. Tadić met for the first time in such a format. In this context, we have realized a truly milestone meeting today”. Additionally, Gül stressed that trilateral meetings provide a very close and friendly relationship between the three countries that are important for the future and the common European vision for the Balkans. He assessed the appointment of the Bosnia ambassador to Serbia as a good decision⁶⁷¹, as well as the adoption of a declaration condemning the Srebrenica genocide.⁶⁷²

Chairman of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and leader of the Party of Democratic Action Sulejman Tihić said that Istanbul summit is contribution to improve relations between the two countries, which have been frozen for a long time. He said that these trilateral meetings are a good base for further concrete agreements between BiH and Serbia.⁶⁷³

While Aleksandar Popov, director of the Center for Regionalization, based in Novi Sad says that Istanbul Declaration has opened up the possibility of solving problems through dialogue [between Bosnia and Serbia]. This before was unthinkable, because of the constant disagreements between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that began during the war.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷¹ From 2007 to 2010, BiH did not have an ambassador to Serbia. The last, Tomislav Leko ended his term in June 2007. Serbia has accepted Borish Arnaut as Bosnia and Herzegovina's new ambassador to Serbia, after the agreement at the tripartite meeting between the heads of diplomacy of Serbia, Turkey and BiH in Belgrade. According to information from multiple sources in Bosnia, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, exerted strong pressure on his counterpart Vuk Jeremić to accept Borish Arnaut as a ambassador of BiH. Turkish Minister Davutoğlu has told to Jeremic that “this would be a good signal from Belgrade to the Bosniak political leadership”.. “Arnaut opet imenovan za ambasadora u Srbiji”, 29.01.2010, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/arnaut-opet-imenovan-za-ambasadora-u-srbiji/w5engr3>. “Press : Srbija će Prikvatiti Borišu Arnauta za Ambasadra BiH u Beogradu”, **Kliker**, 20.01.2010, <http://kliker.info/press-srbija-ce-prikvatiti-borisu-arnauta-za-ambasadora-bih-u-beogradu/>, [15.01.2020].

⁶⁷² “Gül: Zihniyet Değişimi Gerekli”, **Haberler**, 24.04.2010, <https://www.haberler.com/gul-zihniyet-degisimi-gerekli-haberi/>, [11.01.2020].

⁶⁷³ “Turski Most Između Srbije i BiH”, [11.01.2020].

⁶⁷⁴ Aleksandra Stankovic, “Privreda Prelazi Preko Istorije Beograda i Ankare”, **Balkan Insight**, 06.12.2010, <https://balkaninsight.com/2010/12/06/privreda-prelazi-preko-istorije-beograda-i-ankare/?lang=sr>, [12.01.2020].

According to Erhan Türbedar the Trilateral Summit held in Istanbul expresses a positive outcome of Turkey's active initiatives in relation to Western Balkans. Compared with the relative indifference by the Western countries to the political developments in BiH, Turkey kept her focus in this Balkan country and has even been the only country expending serious efforts for BiH. As a result of this effort Ankara has succeeded in setting up a connection between BiH and Serbia, gaining international credit for its political achievement.⁶⁷⁵

The meeting in Istanbul can be interpreted as a turning point in relations between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The relations frozen as a result of the wartime past, but also as a result of the perceptions that Serbia sees its partners only in Banja Luka, this meeting gave to the bilateral relations a completely different direction. As it was seen, one of the main messages of the parties in the summit was that three countries have a common foreign policy goal, namely the determination of Turkey, Serbia and BiH to join the EU.

And if we summarize the effect of the creation of a trilateral meeting mechanism between the three countries, it could be said to have had positive results. In addition to returning of Bosnia's ambassador to Serbia and the adoption of a declaration condemning the Srebrenica genocide, the first bilateral agreements between Serbia and BiH were concluded within the framework of this trilateral mechanism. In Sarajevo, on February 16, 2010, an agreement on cooperation in education, culture and sports was signed, while in Belgrade on February 26, 2010 were signed agreements on amendments to contracts on legal aid in civil and criminal matters and on the enforcement of court decisions in criminal matters. Another agreement between this two countries was signed in the field of tourism on April 13, 2010. In the second half of 2010, two more agreements were concluded between Serbia and BiH in Belgrade: an agreement on police cooperation which was signed on September 24, 2010 and a veterinary cooperation agreement on November 1, 2010.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁵ Erhan Türbedar, "Trilateral Balkan Summit in Istanbul", **TEPAV Evaluation Note**, April 2010, https://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1274094120r2517.Trilateral_Balkan_Summit_in_Istanbul.pdf.

⁶⁷⁶ Đorđe Pavlović, "Trilateralna Saradnja Srbija, Bosne i Hercegovine i Turske", **Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu**, No.1153-1154, (2014): 59.

As for the relations between Serbia and Turkey, during this process both countries on July 12, 2010 in Belgrade signed an agreement on a mutual visa waiver.⁶⁷⁷ The agreement was signed during the visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to Serbia. Erdoğan had meetings with the Prime Minister of Serbia Mirko Cvetković and the President Boris Tadić with whom traveled to Novi Pazar where jointly opened the Turkish Cultural Center Kemal Atatürk. The two officials assessed the bilateral relations emphasizing that they are entering a new phase of strategic relations, which will result in concrete progress in economic, military and cultural co-operation. Apart of visa liberalization agreement, ministers in the governments of Serbia and Turkey also signed six other documents mainly on infrastructure cooperation.⁶⁷⁸

Turkey's diplomatic presence in this period was dynamic. Another initiative in which Turkey was involved was to help Spain⁶⁷⁹ to find a solution for the participation of Serbia and Kosovo in EU-Western Balkans summit on June 2, 2010 in Sarajevo. The problem lies in that Belgrade insists that Kosovo must not be represented on an equal footing with the other states in this meeting.⁶⁸⁰

For this reason, the foreign ministers of Serbia, Spain and Turkey held a trilateral meeting in Belgrade on April 21, 2010. The Belgrade meeting aimed at successfully preparing the Sarajevo summit. During the tripartite meeting, the ministers agreed that the Western Balkans' access to the EU is a common vision.⁶⁸¹ According to Davutoğlu:

“Europe represents peace, prosperity, stability and is synonymous with global power. The Balkans is also a region of EU that represents security, peace, mutual respect and prosperity. This

⁶⁷⁷ Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of Turkey on the mutual abolition of visas entered into force 03.12.2010. Nationals of two countries, holders of valid travel documents, may enter the territory of the other signatory country for a maximum of 90 days, without a visa, for a period of six months from the date of first entry. “Ukinute vize za nosioce važećih putnih isprava Republike Srbije i Republike Turske”, **Republika Srbija Ministarstvo Spoljnih Poslova**, 09.12.2010, <http://www.mfa.rs/sr/index.php/konzularni-poslovi/putovanja-u-inostranstvo/vesti-za-putovanja-uinostranstvo/6017-2010-12-09-11-41-01?lang=lat>, [03.01.2020].

⁶⁷⁸ Rade Ranković, “Turski Premijer Erdogan Posetio Srbiju”, **Glas Amerike**, <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/serbia-turkey-erdogan-98266289/768928.html>, [07.01.2020].

⁶⁷⁹ From 1 January to 30 June 2010, Spain held the six-month rotating Presidency of the European Union. Spain as chair of the EU presidency on that period, was the organizer of this summit in Sarajevo.

⁶⁸⁰ Zeljko Pantelic, “Western Balkans Summit Continues to Cause Headaches”, **EU Observer**, <https://euobserver.com/news/30031>, [16.01.2020].

⁶⁸¹ “Türkiye, Sırbistan ve İspanya Dışişleri Bakanları Belgrad'da Bir Araya Geldi”, **Beyaz Gazete**, 21.04.2010, <http://beyazgazete.com/haber/2010/4/21/turkiye-sirbistan-ve-ispanya-disisleri-bakanlari-belgrad-da-bir-araya-geldi-93519.html>, [16.01.2020].

meeting constitutes the most effective tripartite mechanism for the realization of this strategic goal.”⁶⁸²

Whereas the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miguel Ángel Moratinos in Belgrade has expressed the support of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union to the full integration of the Western Balkans into the EU. He stressed the importance of Spain, Serbia and Turkey working together to find ways to ensure the success of the Sarajevo summit, although he also recalled the difference in position with Turkey regarding Kosovo.⁶⁸³

The host of this meeting the Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić declared that:

“Three ministers expressed complete dedication and willingness to find a way to make the upcoming ministers conference in Sarajevo a success. We discussed the Sarajevo conference which is very important and Serbia will do everything to make it successful. I hope we will manage to resolve all open issues. We have not done it yet, but we are working very hard on it.”⁶⁸⁴

Eventually an agreement on bridging the differences between the two parties was reached with the inclusion of Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini who proposed the use of the so-called “Gymnich” format as a possible solution, under which only the names of the participants were displayed not the names of the states they represent or their national symbols. The participation in the Sarajevo summit by representatives of both Serbia and Kosovo was commented as another important step toward easing tensions in the region.⁶⁸⁵

As for the next trilateral summit between Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina as agreed at the Istanbul Summit in 2010, was held in Karađorđevo in Serbia on 25 April 2011. At the second summit participated Boris Tadić, Abdullah Gül and all three members of the Presidency of BiH – Haris Silajdžić, Nebojša Radmanović and Željko

⁶⁸² **Ibid.**

⁶⁸³ “Moratinos Expresa el Apoyo de la Presidencia Española a la Plena Integración de los Balcanes en la UE”, **La Cerca**, 21.04.2010, http://www.lacerca.com/noticias/presidencia_espanola_union_europea_2010/moratinos-presidencia-balcenes-ue-59787-1.html, [16.01.2020].

⁶⁸⁴ “Jeremic: Seeking Solution for Successful Sarajevo Conference”, **Republika Srbija Ministarstvo Spoljnih Poslova**, 21.04.2010, http://www.mfa.gov.rs/Bilteni/Engleski/b210410_e.html, [16.01.2020].

⁶⁸⁵ Sabina Arslanagic, “West Balkans Reassured about EU Prospects in Sarajevo”, **Balkan Insight**, 02.06.2010, <https://balkaninsight.com/2010/06/02/west-balkans-reassured-about-eu-prospects-in-sarajevo/>, [16.01.2020].

Komšić.⁶⁸⁶ The main conclusions of the summit were that Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey have a common European future and each country must respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.⁶⁸⁷ In this context, Serbian President Tadić emphasized the importance of reconciliation in the region and the prosecution of war crimes. As a precondition for quality cooperation in the future Tadić sees the minimization of prejudices that continue to live in the three countries. Additionally he said that the will of whole region is to be integrated into the EU as soon as possible, and that is the most important political goal that should bring about the well-being of the citizens.⁶⁸⁸ Turkish President Abdullah Gül stressed the desire for cooperation and readiness to help in solving the problems of the Balkan countries by respecting the territorial integrity and the principle of non-interference. Also he said that Balkans above all Serbia is not in the periphery but in the heart of Europe emphasizing the importance of this region for the EU.⁶⁸⁹ Whereas Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia Nebojša Radmanović said that meetings of this format shows that after a tumultuous past, in the 21st century everyone wants the Balkans to be an oasis of a peace. “All three countries are committed to the EU and we are able to exchange views but also to help each other” said Radmanović. According to him, the meeting also covered NATO rapprochement but that all three countries have different views on the issue so this wasn't a priority topic for the parties.⁶⁹⁰

After the end of this second summit, there were mixed reactions from various political and analytical circles in the region. The Serbian Radical Party has estimated that summit of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey in Karađorđevo is “a continuation of the catastrophic policy” that Serbian President Boris Tadić is following since last year in Istanbul. In an press release, Radicals stated that:

⁶⁸⁶ “Završen Samit u Karađorđevu”, **Tacno**, 26.04.2011, <https://www.tacno.net/novosti/završen-samit-u-karaorevu/>, [17.01.2020].

⁶⁸⁷ Iva Martinović, “Samit u Karađorđevu: Tri Zemlje Imaju Zajedničku Evropsku Budućnost”, **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 26.04.2011, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/poceo_samit_u_karadjordjevu/9505636.html, [17.01.2020].

⁶⁸⁸ Nataša Mijušković, “Trilateral u Karađorđevu”, **RTS**, 26.04.2011, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/881798/Trilateral+u+Kara%C4%91or%C4%91evu.html>, [17.01.2020].

⁶⁸⁹ “Зажеднички Пут Према Европи”, **Novosti**, 26.04.2011, <https://www.novosti.rs/%0.393.html:328409-Zajednicki-put-prema-Evropi>, [17.01.2020].

⁶⁹⁰ “Srbija, BiH i Turska za Zapadni Balkan u EU”, **Radio Televizija Vojvodina**, 26.04.2011, http://rtv.rs/sr_lat/politika/srbija-bih-i-turska-za-zapadni-balkan-u-eu_250780.html, [17.01.2020].

“Tadić allowed himself to weaken Republika Srpska's position in Bosnia and Herzegovina by signing the shameful Istanbul Declaration and then allowed Turkey to interfere in Serbia's domestic politics. Turkey is unashamedly promoting its goals in the Balkans, which is to rebuild the Ottoman Empire.”⁶⁹¹

Radicals recall that Turkey was among the first states that recognized the illegally independence of Kosovo.⁶⁹²

Political parties in Republika Srpska oppose active political engagement of Turkey in the region, especially when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The leader of the nationalist Alliance of Independent Social Democrats Milorad Dodik said that such meetings were just “good forms of communication” and showed that there was “nothing” from the Istanbul Declaration.⁶⁹³

The political parties in BiH have differing opinion on this summit. Selim Bešlić, from the Social Democratic Party of BiH estimate the non interference in the internal political issues of other countries as the most significant message sent from Karađorđevo. However, Beriz Belkić of the Party for BiH believes that an agreement on non-interference in the internal affairs of neighboring countries must be the starting point for all other talks. The Party for BiH also believes that Republic of Turkey can be a significant factor in normalizing relations with the region.⁶⁹⁴

But even after the second trilateral summit there was progress in relations between states. Serbia and BiH on June 9, 2011 signed an agreement on temporary employment of nationals of the two countries, making BiH the first country with which Serbia has signed such an agreement. The first official visit of the Serbian President Boris Tadić in BiH took place on July 6, 2011 in Sarajevo. On that occasion, Tadić met with the three-member BiH Presidency, the President of the BiH Council of Ministers and the collegium of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly. He reaffirmed Serbia's determination to respect the territorial integrity of BiH and all agreements reached by the three

⁶⁹¹ “Reakcije na Sastanak u Karađorđevu”, **RTS**, 26.04.2011, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/882302/Reakcije+na+sastanak+u+Kara%C4%91or%C4%91evu.html>, [18.01.2020].

⁶⁹² **Ibid.**

⁶⁹³ “Veća Ulaganja Turske u Srbiju”, **Novosti**, 27.04.2011, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.69.html:328626-Veca-ulaganja-Turske-u-Srbiju>, [18.01.2020].

⁶⁹⁴ Marija Arnaudović, “BiH o Samitu: Razgovori Među Susjedima se Moraju Nastaviti”, **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 26.04.2011, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/rekacije_bih_unutrasnje_stvari_nemijesanje_susjedi/16794685.html, [18.01.2020].

constituent peoples, and that Belgrade would not use the status of guarantor of the Dayton Agreement to interfere in BiH's internal affairs.⁶⁹⁵ It was evident that relations between Serbia and BiH were making progress. An additional argument is when heads of diplomacy of Serbia and BiH Vuk Jeremić and Zlatko Lagumdžija on March 14, 2012 in Belgrade signed an agreement on providing mutual consular assistance to citizens of Serbia and BiH in third countries. According to the two ministers, the period of difficult co-operation between Serbia and BiH is over and there are no more obstacles to developing relations. Additionally, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić pointed out that period of difficult relationship caused by internal circumstances between two countries is over and there is now plenty of space for cooperation, and Serbia with BiH share a common future within the European process.⁶⁹⁶

Whereas BiH and Turkey within the framework of trilateral mechanism framework signed the agreement concerned readmission in Ankara on February 15, 2012.⁶⁹⁷ The signatories of the agreement were the minister of internal affairs of Turkey Idris Naim Şahin and his counterpart from BiH Sadik Ahmetović. Şahin declared that Turkey attaches great importance to BiH and will always support and assist it. He added that “countries cannot fight terrorism and organized crime on their own and there is a need to counter this problem through international cooperation”. Additionally, according to the Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs, “there is a need for information sharing and collaboration in multiple areas”.⁶⁹⁸ While Ahmetović emphasized that agreement would be a symbol of strengthening relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. “This agreement has shown that Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina are ready to fight human trafficking at the international level”, concluded Ahmetović.⁶⁹⁹ While the second agreement was reached on the field of agriculture and rural development. The agreement was signed on June 26, 2012 in Ankara. The goal of both countries was to create better conditions for the development of bilateral collaboration in the field of agriculture and

⁶⁹⁵ Pavlović, “Trilateralna Saradnja Srbija, Bosne i Hercegovine”, 60; “Tadić: Podrška integritetu BiH”, **Glas Amerike**, 06.06.2011, <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/serbia-bih-visit-07-06-2011-125094744/732495.html>, [18.01.2020].

⁶⁹⁶ Rade Ranković, “Novi Period Odnosa Srbije i BiH”, **Glas Amerike**, 14.03.2012, <https://www.glasamerike142674045/735549.html>, [19.01.2020].

⁶⁹⁷ **Ibid.**

⁶⁹⁸ “Turska će Nastaviti Podržavati BiH”, **Al Jazeera Balkans**, 15.02.2012, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/turska-ce-nastaviti-podrzavati-bih>, [19.02.2020].

⁶⁹⁹ **Ibid.**

rural development. The agreement was signed by the Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH Mirko Šarović and the Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey Mehmet Mehdi Eker.⁷⁰⁰

While Turkey and Serbia were testifying the strengthening of their relations even more during this period with the signing of agreement for the financing of the project for reconstruction of part of Morava Airport in Ladjevci near Kraljevo. According to the agreement, Turkish government will donate € 10 million at Morava Airport. This agreement was signed by Serbian Defense Minister Dragan Šutanovac and Turkish Ambassador Ali Rıza Çolak.⁷⁰¹ Minister Šutanovac declared that overall project costs € 25 million from which € 10 million is provided by the Turkish government and rest of the funds are provided from the National Investment Plan of Serbia. Šutanovac also pointed out that this project came after about four years of planning, agreeing and fulfilling plans.⁷⁰² However, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Serbia Ali Rıza Çolak said that project is a symbol of friendship between Serbia and Turkey, and that traveling of the people from southern Serbia will be greatly facilitated. He stressed that, “I am convinced that this project will continue to bring more Turkish investments in Serbia in the coming period” emphasizing that this donation shows that the Turkish government also believes in the future of cooperation with Serbia.⁷⁰³ But even though the agreement was signed her implementation did not come to fruition. The reason was that the Minister of Construction and Urbanism, Velimir Ilić (in office from 2012-2014) stopped implementing the project because according to him the problem was the request of Turkish government that construction to be done by Turkish firms. And their estimate was that the deal was worth € 28 million. Ten million would be given to the Serbian government as donation and the rest would be funded by the Serbian Government. Due to this situation Ilić stated that it was not justifiable to finance it as domestic firms made an offer of 18 million euros, ten less than the Turks. So it turns out that Turks are not

⁷⁰⁰ “Potpisan Sporazum o Saradnji u Oblasti Poljoprivrede”, **Capital**, 26.06.2012, <https://www.capital.ba/potpisan-sporazum-o-saradnji-u-oblasti-poljoprivrede/>, [19.01.2020].

⁷⁰¹ “Turska za Aerodrom u Lađevcima Daje 10 Miliona Evra”, **Radio Televizija Vojvodina**, 28.04.2012, http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/izbori2012/predsednicki/turska-za-aerodrom-u-ladjevcima-daje-10-miliona-evra_315984.html, [19.01.2020].

⁷⁰² **Ibid.**

⁷⁰³ “Turska Donira Deset Miliona Eura za Aerodrom kod Kraljeva”, **TRT**, 28.04.2012, <https://www.trt.net.tr/bosanski/region/2012/04/28/turska-donira-deset-miliona-eura-za-aerodrom-kod-kraljeva-5735>, [19.01.2020].

really giving anything to Serbia, at contrary they are asking for Turkish businessmen to get the project.⁷⁰⁴

It should be also emphasized that trilateral mechanism on certain occasions before the third summit in Ankara had certain crises. The statement of newly elected Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić given on June 1, 2012 that genocide was not committed in Srebrenica but it was a horrible crime, significantly damaged Belgrade-Sarajevo relations.⁷⁰⁵ On the other hand, Turkish-Serbian relations were compromised by a statement by Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan in one meeting with the provincial heads of his Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Ankara stating that Bosnia-Herzegovina now is under “care” of Turkey. Erdoğan recalled a statement made by the former president of BiH Alija Izetbegović, when he visited Izetbegović on his death bed in 2003. Erdoğan said that, “He (Izetbegović) whispered in my ear these phrases: ‘Bosnia is entrusted to you (Turkey). These places are what remain from the Ottoman Empire’”.⁷⁰⁶ The statement caused negative reactions among Serbian and Croatian politicians in BiH, as well as in Serbia.⁷⁰⁷ Because of these “accidental” statements by state leaders that are part of trilateral mechanism there wasn't a positive atmosphere for organising the next summit planned for 2012.

The Trilateral mechanism experienced a new affirmative momentum when foreign minister of Serbia Ivan Mrkić visited Sarajevo on December 28, 2012. During this visit, Mrkić and BiH Foreign Minister Zlatkom Lagumdžija signed an Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Ministers of BiH and Serbian Government on co-operation in the field of European integration.⁷⁰⁸ In this period, another meeting was realised between Ahmet Davutoğlu and Ivan Mrkić on January 2, 2013 in Belgrade. During this meeting was signed an agreement on employment of staff in diplomatic and

⁷⁰⁴ Bojana Anđelić, “Sumnjiva Odluka Ministra Velja Ilić Odbio Donaciju od 10 Miliona Evra”, **Blic**, 08.10.2014, <https://www.blic.rs/biznis/sumnjiva-odluka-ministra-velja-ilic-odbio-donaciju-od-10-miliona-evra/1s2r2rr>, [18.01.2020].

⁷⁰⁵ Pavlović, “Trilateralna Saradnja Srbija, Bosne i Hercegovine”, 61.

⁷⁰⁶ Vesna Peric Zimonjic, “Balkans Bristles Under Turkey’s Gaze”, **Inter Press Service**, 24.07.2012, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/07/balkans-bristle-under-turkeys-gaze/>, [20.01.2020].

⁷⁰⁷ Pavlović, “Trilateralna Saradnja Srbija...”, 61.

⁷⁰⁸ Rade Ranković, “Srpski Šef Diplomacije u Sarajevu”, **Glas Amerike**, 27.12.2012, <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/serbia-bosnia/1573368.html>, [20.01.2020].

consular missions.⁷⁰⁹ Afterwards followed the President Nikolić 's visit to Turkey on February 4-5, 2013, as well as the arrival of Nebojša Radmanović and Bakir Izetbegović in Belgrade on April 23, 2013.⁷¹⁰ Two days later, Nikolić apologized for the crime in Srebrenica in an interview for BHRTV saying, “I am kneeling and asking for an apology in the name of Serbia for the crime committed in Srebrenica. I apologize for the crimes committed on behalf of our state and our people by any individual from our nation.”⁷¹¹ As a result of several meetings between representatives of the trilateral states was created a positive atmosphere and favorable conditions for the organization of the third summit in Ankara.

The third Trilateral Summit of the Presidents of Turkey, BiH and Serbia was organized on May 14-15, 2013 in the capital of Turkey in Ankara. The summit was hosted by Turkish President Abdullah Gül, while his guests were Chairman of the BiH Presidential Council Nebojša Radmanović as well as the council members Bakir Izetbegović and Zeljko Komsić and President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić .⁷¹²

At the third trilateral meeting the heads of the three countries agreed on a joint Declaration. The Declaration emphasizes the role of trilateral meetings as an institutional framework for regional co-operation, emphasizing co-operation in the fields of economy, culture, education, science, energy, infrastructure, transport, sports, tourism and the fight against terrorism and all forms of extremism. The signatories of the Declaration supported the reform processes in the three countries that will result with European Union (EU) integration. The Declaration states that the next trilateral meeting will be held in 2014 in Sarajevo.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁹ “Davutoglu: Srbija i Turska Imaju Istu Viziju”, **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 01.02.2013, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/24890278.html>, [20.01.2020].

⁷¹⁰ Pavlović, “Trilateralna Saradnja Srbija, Bosne i Hercegovine”, 62.

⁷¹¹ “Predsjednik Srbije T. Nikolić: “Ja Klečim i Tražim Pomilovanje za Srbiju Zbog Zločina Koji je Izvršen u Srebrenici.”, **Voa News**, 24.04.2013, <https://ba.voanews.com/a/nikolic-serbia-srebrenica-crime-appolgy/1648908.html>, [20.01.2020].

⁷¹² “Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia Trilateral Summit”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-bosnia-and-herzegovina-and-serbia-trilateral-summit.en.mfa>, [20.01.2020].

⁷¹³ “Bo Анкара Усогласена Декларацијата од Третата Трилатерала”, **A1**, 15.05.2013, <https://a1on.mk/region1/vo-ankara-usoglasena-deklaracijata-o/>, [20.01.2020]; For the details of Ankara Summit Declaration, see: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ankara-summit-declaration-adopted-at-the-conclusion-of-turkey-_bosnia-herzegovina-_serbia-trilateral-summit_-15-may-2013_-ankara.en.mfa.

The president of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić emphasized that Serbia will use its best efforts to intensify regional cooperation in order to have a stable region in political and economical context. He added that the meeting will result in stronger political relations and this important event should result in economic cooperation. Serbian president also used the opportunity to urge Turkey not to lobby for Kosovo's membership in international organizations.⁷¹⁴ Chairman of BiH Presidency Nebojša Radmanović expect that as a outcome of the trilateral summit to have more economic interaction among the three countries.⁷¹⁵ The host of the summit the Turkish president Abdullah Gül stated that Trilateral Balkans Summit restored trust and political will to deepen the cooperation among the parties. Gül underlined that the vision of the leaders of Balkan countries is to have a new mindset towards the future, not the past.⁷¹⁶

But very soon, another crisis hampered the concept of trilateral mechanism between the three countries. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on October 23, 2013, during his visit to Kosovo, more specifically in Prizren, in his speech emphasized that Kosovo is its second country stating that "Turkey is Kosovo and Kosovo Turkey".

Erdoğan's statement was called undiplomatic by Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and as scandalous by Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, while the Serbian government assessed the Turkish prime minister's statements, "as a flagrant violation of international law and interference in internal affairs of the Republic of Serbia."⁷¹⁷

Meanwhile the Serbian president Tomislav Nikolić emphasized that the scandal made in Prizren by the Prime Minister of Turkey is a gross and reckless destruction of good and friendly established relations by disrespecting and grossly abusing Serbia's sovereignty and revising history. For that reason Serbia decided to freeze her participation in the trilateral meetings between Serbia, BiH and Turkey until Turkish leadership apologizes for this statement.⁷¹⁸ And in fact, since this crisis, the next trilateral summit scheduled

⁷¹⁴ "Trilateral Summit held in Ankara", **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, 15.05.2013, <http://www.ankara.mfa.gov.rs/newstext.php?subaction=showfull&id=1369750007&ucat=19&>, [20.01.2020].

⁷¹⁵ **Ibid.**

⁷¹⁶ "Third Meeting of Trilateral Balkans Summit begins in Ankara", **Anadolu Agency**, 15.05.2013, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/a-new-balkan-mindset/246135>, [21.01.2020].

⁷¹⁷ "Nikolić zbog Erdogana i Kosova ne Želi na Sastanak s BiH i Turskom", **Dnevnik**, 26.10.2013, [https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/nikolic-zbog-erdogana-i-kosova-ne-zeli-na-sastanak-s-bih-i-turskom---](https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/nikolic-zbog-erdogana-i-kosova-ne-zeli-na-sastanak-s-bih-i-turskom---308689.html)308689.html, [21.01.2020].

⁷¹⁸ **Ibid.**

for 2014 was not held. It was the year 2019 when Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina met again in the format of the trilateral summit.

If the format of trilateral meetings between three states is analyzed, it can be seen that initiators established her institutional form on three levels: a trilateral consultative mechanism in which are realized meetings of foreign ministers trilateral, in trilateral summits attended the heads of state and trilateral meetings of ministers of economy. The latter was established just before the third summit in Ankara. The first format which was composed of foreign ministers have for duty to arrange the trilateral summits attended by the the head of states. For the first trilateral summit, five trilateral consultative mechanism meetings were held. While for the second and the third summit it was necessary only one foreign ministers meeting to arrange the details for the summit.⁷¹⁹

Concerning the third institutional form of cooperation, that of economy, the first meeting of the ministers in charge of economy and trade was held on April 11, 2013. Whereas the second one was held at the beginning of the third trilateral summit on May 14, 2013. At the second meeting, Turkish Minister of Economy Zafer Çağlayan, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH Mirko Šarović and the Minister of Foreign and Domestic Trade of Serbia Rasim Ljajić signed the Declaration on Economic and Trade Cooperation. The declaration aimed to improve the three countries economic collaboration in all fields and increase trade and joint presence on other markets.⁷²⁰

The outcome of this initiative in the field of economy was the organization of two trilateral business forums between BiH, Serbia and Turkey. The first was organized in Sarajevo in October 2015 and the second in Istanbul one year later. The organizers of this event were the BiH Foreign Trade Chamber, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and the Turkish Foreign Trade Committee. In addition to the representatives of the state delegations, in these business forums also were attended by the businessmen of three countries in order to have the opportunity to discuss the possibilities of cooperation, to

⁷¹⁹ Đorđe Pavlović, "The Future of the Trilateral Cooperation among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey and Serbia", **Center for Strategic Research- SAM**, (2016): 20.

⁷²⁰ "Bosnia, Serbia and Turkey Sign Trade Agreement", **Balkan Insight**, 14.05.2013, <https://balkaninsight.com/2013/05/14/bosnia-serbia-and-turkey-sign-cooperation-protocol/>, [21.01.2020].

present their projects and point out the problems between the businessmen of these three states.⁷²¹

It can be said that the initiative to establish a tripartite format of cooperation produced positive results in both the political and economic contexts. Regarding the political context, the normalization of relations between Bosnia and Serbia, the intensification of Turkey's relations with Serbia and Bosnia, frequent visits of state delegations, Istanbul Declaration at the first trilateral summit that cemented the sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH, Turkey's diplomatic involvement in finding a formula for Kosovo and Serbia's participation in EU-Western Balkans summit on 2 June 2010 in Sarajevo. After that two successive summits were organized in Karađorđevo (2011) and Ankara (2013) where was reaffirmed the position of BiH sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the vision regarding the prospect towards the European Union. As a result of this trilateral mechanism there were signed a large number of agreements between the three countries. These are some of the relevant indicators that point to the political success of this initiative.

In terms of economy, trilateral cooperation has significantly improved trade exchange among the three states. Regarding the economic relations between Serbia and Turkey, after the signing of free trade agreement for industrial products on October 26, 2009, significantly increased the volume of trade between two countries. In fact, according to the data provided by political scientist Đorđe Pavlovič:

“Serbian-Turkish trade exchange increased from \$338.9 million in 2009, it rose to \$819.7 million in 2014. Serbian exports to Turkey expanded from \$45.1 to \$230 million, while at the same time Turkish exports to Serbia expanded from \$293.8 to \$589.7 million”.⁷²² Trade exchange between Turkey and BiH also has increased. The trade volume between two countries in the period 2009-2014 rose from \$278.7 to \$493.4 million, with BiH exports to Turkey more than tripling (from \$52.1 to \$171.4 million), while Turkish exports to BiH increasing by 40% (from \$226.6 to \$322 million).⁷²³

However, the trade exchange between Serbia and BiH also increased in the period between 2009-2014. Namely, the “trade volume of two countries increased from \$1.48

⁷²¹ “Drugi Trilateralni Poslovni Forum Privrednika Turske, Srbije i BiH u Istanbulu”, **Biznis Info**, 26.10.2016, <https://www.biznisinfo.ba/istanbul-drugi-trilateralni-poslovni-forum-privrednika-turske-srbije-bih/>, [22.01.2020].

⁷²² Pavlovič, “The Future of the Trilateral Cooperation”, 22.

⁷²³ **Ibid.**

to \$1.85 billion. At the same time, BiH exports to Serbia rose from \$432.2 to \$534.6 million, while Serbian exports to BiH increased from \$1.02 to \$1.32 billion”.⁷²⁴

From perspective of analyzing the outcomes of each state separately from this trilateral mechanism it can be said that each state has achieved its goals. In the prism of Turkey can be said to has testified to international community that it is among the regional relevant actors that can launch initiatives with successful results. The mediation between Serbia and Bosnia in overcoming differences on certain issues testified the diplomatic potential that Turkey possesses. The rapprochement between two countries was not possible until Turkey mediation through the tripartite mechanism. Turkey's involvement in this process also has shown to both the European Union and USA that Turkey can help in the process of stability and economic prospects of the Western Balkans. In economic terms in addition to the trade growth mentioned earlier improving relations with Serbia is a necessity for Turkey having in mind Serbia's strategic position as a transit country for Turkish products in Europe.

On the other hand, for the Serbian leadership the trilateral cooperation proposed by Turkey was welcomed given the country's aspirations to integrate into the European Union. This meant that for opening accession negotiations with the EU, one of the basic conditions was to have good relations with neighbors. And in this context for "catching the train" towards EU was necessary improvement relations with BiH. The adoption of the Srebrenica declaration, the Bosnian ambassador's reception in Belgrade, Potočari memorial visit of the Srebrenica victims by Serbian leadership and the signing of several bilateral agreements with Bosnia were evidence of Serbia's Euro-Atlantic prospects. And the second most important factor for Serbia was the Turkish market. Since the trilateral mechanism started, trade growth between the two countries was evident. In this context Serbian leadership in all meetings with Turkish leadership constantly called for Turkish investors.

Whereas from the Bosnian prism, signing of the Istanbul Declaration represented a seal for the country's territorial integrity, minimizing all fears of Serbia's eventual claims to Bosnian territory. For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the aspect of improving bilateral relations with Serbia brought benefits both in the political context and in trade growth.

⁷²⁴ **Ibid.**

While the relationship with Turkey has a history of positive relations since the beginning of the 1990's.

Bosnia's leadership, with particular emphasis on Bosnian Muslims in a symbolic context sees Turkey as their big brother. While trilateral economic meetings in the form of business forums were more active. The business forums of 2015 and 2016 were evidence to this. But in the level of head of states since 2013 another summit wasn't organized until 2019 when again was reactivated as a result of the parties' willingness to intensify relations between them.

3.2.3. Ahmet Davutoğlu's Speech in Sarajevo and the Rise of Dilemmas in Neo Ottoman Approach of Turkey

On October 16, 2009, in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu delivered a speech at the conference on "Ottoman Heritage and the Muslim Community in the Balkans Today" organized by the Center for Civilizations in the Balkans-BALMED. The speech delivered in Sarajevo was good starting point for understanding the objectives of Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans under the leadership of Davutoğlu. In fact, according to some political commentators, Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo was the base of the debate on Turkey's so-called Neo-Ottoman approach. Different academic and political circles saw this speech in different prisms. Some even went to extreme situations for a new conquest of the Turks in the Balkans.

In the first part of the speech, Davutoğlu refers to the Balkans as a peninsula that possesses three characteristics. First characteristic that Davutoğlu pointed out is that:

“Balkan region has been a “buffer zone” in the geopolitical understanding i.e. a buffer zone in transition from European continent to Asia and even Africa, from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean, from the North to South, and from the East to the West.”⁷²⁵

The second characteristic of the Balkan peninsula is related with the geo-economic aspect. In fact, the Balkan region is a centre and cross roads for geo-economic transactions. And the third characteristic of the Balkans is being the centre of geo-

⁷²⁵ “Adress of H.E Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu- Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey”, **The Ottoman Legacy and the Balkan Muslim Communities Today**, Conference Proceedings, ed.Halit Eren (Sarajevo:The Balkans Civilisation Centre, 2011), 13.

cultural interactions. Davutoğlu says that, “different cultures have interacted in the Balkans over the course of history including different nations who came as a result of mass-migrations and mixed with each other.”⁷²⁶

Davutoğlu then compares the perception for the Balkans today and how it was during the Ottoman Empire. He said that:

“When today we talk about the Balkans, we tend to think that the region is placed in the periphery of Europe, rather than its center. Is it true that the Balkan region is really in the European periphery in terms of geography? Certainly not. In fact, the Balkan region is right in the centre of one of the most strategic locations in Afro-Eurasia. During the Ottoman state, the Balkan region became a crucial center in world politics, beginning with the 16th century. This was a golden age for the Balkans.”⁷²⁷

Referring to the golden ages of the Balkans during the Ottoman period, Davutoğlu emphasized that, “people from the Balkans were those who were running world politics in the 16th century, and they were not all Turks”.⁷²⁸ Part of them were Slavs, some of them Albanians, while some of them were from Greek origin. But all of them run world politics in harmony. As an example, Davutoğlu took the personalities like Mehmed-paşa Sokolović (Sokullu Mehmet Pasha) during the sultanate of Suleiman the Magnificent, or Mehmed Ali-paşa who was Albanian by origin. Ali Pasha not only became one of the leading figures of the Ottoman Empire in his time but was also the founder of modern Egypt in the XIX century.⁷²⁹

In the same context, Davutoğlu also talks about the development of cities like Belgrade or Sarajevo. According to him:

“Belgrade was like a village or a small town in the 14th century. But during the Ottoman period, Belgrade became the central city, pivotal city of Danube and Central Europe in the economic and cultural sense. Whereas Sarajevo should be seen as a miracle, like a miniature of this heritage. If you understand Sarajevo, you can understand the whole Ottoman history. This implies that the Balkans has the geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-economic destiny that will either become the center of the world or become the victim of global competition.”⁷³⁰

Giving the weight and glorification to the Ottoman centuries in the Balkans, respectively from the 16th century until the 19th century when the Ottoman empire began to shrink slowly, Davutoğlu emphasize that after this period Balkans began to confront divisions and remained fragmented so far. He says that:

⁷²⁶ **Ibid.**

⁷²⁷ **Ibid**, 14.

⁷²⁸ **Ibid**, 15.

⁷²⁹ **Ibid.**

⁷³⁰ **Ibid.**

“Today whenever we speak of the Balkan region; we speak of divisions, ethnic clashes, rather than culture and civilization. The absence of geo-cultural interaction leads to cultural clashes; absence of geo-economic transactions leads to economic stagnation; and the absence of political authority leads to becoming a buffer zone for major conflicts.”⁷³¹

“Now, it is time to reunite all these and rediscover the spirit of the Balkans”, said Davutoğlu. Additionally he said that:

“In order to alleviate the geo-political buffer zone character of Balkans and save the region from becoming a victim of violent conflicts, it is necessary to create a new sense of unity in the region. It is necessary to strengthen regional ownership of cooperation initiatives and a regional common sense. Balkan history is not only a history of conflicts, on the contrary between the 16th and the 19th centuries, Balkan history was a success story.”⁷³²

Davutoğlu optimistically stressed that this can be reinvented and reestablished by creating “a new political ownership, a new multicultural coexistence and a new economic zone.”⁷³³

According to Davutoğlu:

“All Balkan cities were multicultural throughout history. All people lived together and because of strong cultural diversity, there was a rise in multicultural interaction. In the 1990s, those who organized the massacres in Srebrenica and Eastern Bosnia, were barbaric people who did not want to tolerate differences in the cultural sense. The spirit of Sarajevo is the spirit of coexistence and the spirit of living together.”⁷³⁴

Describing the era of the Ottoman Empire as successful, Davutoğlu hopes that again it will be reestablished the spirit of the Balkan region. Critical writers call this approach “Neo-Ottomanism”, but Turkish Foreign Minister says that, “he don't to refer to the Ottoman state as a foreign policy issue. What he is underlying is the Ottoman legacy”.⁷³⁵ According to him, “The Ottoman centuries in the Balkans were peace and success stories”. Davutoğlu insisted in reinventing the dynamics of that time and this is the determinant foreign policy parameter for Turkey.⁷³⁶

Wanting to describe the geographical, historical, emotional but also family closeness Turkish foreign minister stressed that:

“Turkey is a small Balkans, a small Middle East and a small Caucasia. There are more Bosnians living in Turkey then those living in Bosnia; more Albanians living in Turkey then those living in Albania; more Chechens living in Turkey then in Chechnya; more Abkhazians than those living in Abkhazia. Besides, Turkey have Kurds, Arabs and Turks living together, because of the Ottoman legacy. For all these Muslim nationalities in the Balkans, Caucasia and the Middle East,

⁷³¹ **Ibid**, 16.

⁷³² **Ibid**.

⁷³³ **Ibid**.

⁷³⁴ **Ibid**.

⁷³⁵ **Ibid**, 17.

⁷³⁶ **Ibid**.

Turkey is a safe haven and homeland".As a result of this, Balkan people are welcomed in Anatolia but first and foremost Turkey wants this people to be safe and secure in Bosnia as the owners of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina."⁷³⁷

In the final part of his speech, wishing to convey to the audience the ambitions of Turkey's foreign policy, Davutoğlu emphasizes that:

"Just like the rise of the Ottoman Balkans in the 16th century as the center of world politics, there will be an effort to make these regions and Turkey the center of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy. The objective of Turkey is to reintegrate the Balkans region, the Middle East and Caucasia based on the principle of regional and global peace for all humanity."⁷³⁸

From the passages of Davutoğlu's speech we can say that Davutoğlu historically refers to good multiethnic experiences during the Ottoman Empire. In a way, these experiences can still inspire the region that integration policy can work and that multiethnic and multireligious cities are signs of progress of this policy, an expression of the success of civilization, and not a weakness that leads to failure. Another issue that also opened the discussions of Turkey's Neo-Ottoman approach was that in Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo never was mentioned the integration of Balkan countries together with Turkey into the European Union. If Davutoğlu would have mentioned the topic of EU integration, probably would not have left space for the Neo Ottoman skepticism toward Turkish foreign policy.⁷³⁹

In the academic and political circles, there are different views on current Turkish foreign policy in the region. The group of skeptics refers that Turkey wants to return and conquer the Balkans like their Ottoman predecessors over the past centuries. On the other hand, there is a view that Turkey's intentions are sincere and its proactive approach is intended to contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability in the Western Balkans.

One of the skeptics of the Turkish foreign policy under JDP, is Albanian opinionist Pirro Misha. In his text "Neo-Ottomanism and Albania", commenting on Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo he raises concerns about the "Neo-Ottomanist" doctrine in which Misha interprets it as a move to counterbalance EU influence in the Balkans. As noted earlier,

⁷³⁷ **Ibid.**

⁷³⁸ **Ibid.**, 19.

⁷³⁹ Deniz Memedi, "Neo Osmanizmi, Doktrina e Thellësisë Strategjike dhe Impakti i saj në Ballkanin Perëndimor", (Master thesis, South East European University, Faculty of Public Administration and Political Science, 2013), 64.

the lack of emphasis on the EU integration process during Davutoğlu's speech leaves space for doubts about Turkey's new approach. According to him, in the new Turkish geopolitical vision the European presence in the Balkans is an unwanted competition. Davutoğlu also hints at an editorial he wrote for the Belgrade daily Politika titled "Turkey and Serbia two key Balkan countries" complaining that as a result of EU enlargement in the region the dynamics of Turkish politics in the Balkans over the last decade has slowed. In fact, Misha points out that "Neo-Ottoman" doctrine, even if it evokes Ottoman nostalgia, cannot block Albania's path to Europe. However, he sees it as an intellectual duty to call on Albanian politicians and diplomats to respond to Turkish diplomacy that the friendship between the two countries should not be based on Neo-Ottoman nostalgia but on national interest.⁷⁴⁰

Arbën Xhaferi, the doyen of Albanian politics in Macedonia also expressed skepticism about Turkey's current approach to the Balkans. According to him, in his speech in Sarajevo, Davutoğlu seeks to revive the role of the Ottomans in the Balkans and to show that re-Ottomanisation of these spaces is the only strategy to calm the tensions in this region. Defining the Balkans as a central rather than a peripheral zone, Turkish Foreign Minister essentially revives the period of Ottoman Empire, that is placing the Turks in the central role from Afghanistan to Sarajevo. At this conference he unilaterally reveals a very ambitious strategy regarding Turkey's role in its former colonies, or more precisely Turkey's future global role.⁷⁴¹ According to Xhaferi, Davutoğlu's project with imperial characteristics opens two kinds of problems: How to implement this project and what will happen to the legacy of Atatürk who closed the anachronistic past and boldly opened the door to modernizing Turkey by European standards. According to him, the first problem concerns the Balkan peoples who have long fought Ottoman rule and still openly continue to manifest a fanatical distance to any revival of the Ottoman idea. This "feeling" is shared by all the peoples of the Balkans, a large part of the Turkish people, but also European countries. How will Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania agree to establish a universal state that unites Europe with the most problematic parts of the world, the Near East and the Far East? There is no substantiated answer to this question

⁷⁴⁰ **Ibid.**

⁷⁴¹ Arbën Xhaferi, "Sfida Osmane", **Zemra Shqiptare**, 31.10.2009, <http://www.zemrashqiptare.net/news/10990/arben-xhaferi-sfida-osmane.html>, [22.02.2020].

in Minister Davutoğlu's speech. His arguments for this option are largely emotional.⁷⁴² The second problem runs counter to Atatürk's own foreign policy premises, which did not accept that other peoples live in Turkey, nor the thesis that Turks live outside Turkey. He even eventually refused to accept the role of the caliph, arguing that many Muslim states have their own political leaders who will refuse to be controlled by a caliph.⁷⁴³ Xhaferi thinks that Davutoğlu's project for the Balkans with rhetoric-emotive character, compared to the real offerings of Western structures can be perceived as an insult to the feelings of citizens.⁷⁴⁴

Also former Yugoslav ambassador to Turkey and university professor Darko Tanasković supports the thesis that within Turkish foreign policy of JDP there is a Neo-Ottoman approach. According to him, what Davutoğlu said openly in Sarajevo is a good thing. None of the Turkish officials can change the thesis and play the "deaf phone" saying that Neo-Ottomanism does not exist. But it is important for us to understand what it is, to become acquainted with him, and to decide what approach to take.⁷⁴⁵ Tanasković defines Neo Ottomanism as effort of Turkey to renew its influence in the areas that are its priority, namely the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus.⁷⁴⁶ Tanasković also emphasize that main protagonists of Neo-Ottomanism are Turkish politicians who do not belong to the urban areas of Constantinople but have Anatolian descent. They are conservative, Islamist, and their base is the University of Beykent, where the head of the Department of International Relations is Ahmet Davutoğlu who has been the main protagonist in this story. The main guide of this foreign policy is his book "Strategic Depth". Interestingly, this book was translated late even though it was published in 2001. This book was not circulated outside of Turkey, and seems to have served to prepare public opinion, especially the narrow circle of Erdoğan's JDP party, while the world on the other hand to not be immediately aware of this thesis that sees Turkey as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, which should be the protagonist of international

⁷⁴² **Ibid.**

⁷⁴³ **Ibid.**

⁷⁴⁴ **Ibid.**

⁷⁴⁵ Darko Tanasković, "Neo-Osmanizam-Povratak Turske na Balkanu", **Srpska Politika**, 22.06.2010, <http://www.srpskapolitika.com/Tekstovi/Analize/2010/latinica/043.html>, [23.02.2020].

⁷⁴⁶ Omer Karabeg, "Polemika: Vodi li Turska Neo Osmansku Politiku na Balkanu", 24.11.2013, **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/most-vodi-li-turska-neoosmansku-politiku-na-balkanu/25178065.html>, [23.02.2020].

relations. This is its multivalent character in the geopolitical, economic and cultural sense. Tanaskovič stresses that Davutoğlu developed the concept of strategic depth, which he defined as geographical and historical depth. While the first term, Turkey's geographical location is well known, the concept of historical depth consists in the fact that Turkey is the heir to the Ottoman centuries, during which permanent foundations were laid in historical, economic and psychological terms, and that Turkey still has the ability and the right to influence in these areas.⁷⁴⁷ Tanaskovič do not deny the legitimacy of Turkish engagement in the economic sphere at all, but what is concerning according to him is the level of symbolism and rhetoric, where high Turkish officials constantly call for the need to renew some Muslim or Ottoman unity, especially when they go to areas where Muslims live - Bosniaks and Albanians. He gives two recent examples in this regard. The first, when Erdoğan in Prizren said the famous phrase that Kosovo is Turkey, and Turkey is Kosovo. And the second is Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo when he talks about the restoration of the golden age of the Ottoman Balkans.⁷⁴⁸ Tanaskovič additionally says that Turkey is present and has influence in the Balkans, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. He argues that Turks do not create prejudice for Serbs as Serbs have for Turks. In other words, they don't hate Serbs, but just want to pursue their interests. The only problem is the way they want to reach them, and how this interests affect Serbia's interests.⁷⁴⁹

Whereas according to Hakan Yavuz, Davutoglu's nostalgia for the Ottoman state as the “golden age” does not correspond with history. The past he presents never existed except as a post-Ottoman utopian narrative.⁷⁵⁰ Yavuz highlights another issue stressing that "Both Erdoğan and Davutoğlu's careless speeches not only put the Muslim communities in the Balkans at risk but also deepen the suspicions of nationalist groups". According to him, in the writings of Davutoğlu, there is neither element regarding the negative memories about the Ottoman empire encountered today in the Balkans. The founders of Republic of Turkey taking into considerations these memories for the

⁷⁴⁷ Tanaskovič, “Neo-Osmanizam-Povratak turske”, [23.02.2020].

⁷⁴⁸ Karabeg, “Polemika: Vodi li Turska”, [23.02.2020].

⁷⁴⁹ Tanaskovič, “Neo-Osmanizam-Povratak Turske”, [23.02.2020].

⁷⁵⁰ M. Hakan Yavuz, **Nostalgia For the Empire : the politics of Neo-Ottomanism**, (Oxford University Press, 2020), 187.

Ottoman state in the Balkans, imposed them to be as distanced as possible and to be aware for the errors of the past.⁷⁵¹

Other intellectuals of the region who share skeptical views regarding the Turkey's presence in the Balkans are Mirolub Jevtič, Sonja Jekič, Tatijana Lazič, Ioannis Michaletos, Kastriot Myftaraj, Ismail Kadare, Veton Surroi, Arbana Xharra and Fahri Xharra, Ibrahim Kelmedni, Enver Robelli etc.⁷⁵²

Apart from skeptical views on Turkish foreign policy approaches, other scholars and politicians in the region see this policy as sincere and constructive.

Nerzuk Ćurak, professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo says that the term Neo Ottomanism is valid if we would similarly introduce terms such as Neo-Germanism, Neo-Russianism etc. According to him, the idea that Turkey is returning back to the Balkans doesn't make sense, because this country belongs geographically, historically and culturally to the Balkans. And when it comes to the term Neo-Ottomanism, the terms very often reflect the ideological position of the author, so in this case the content of this term depends on the author on what he wants to achieve with that term.⁷⁵³ Neo Ottomanism only makes sense in a comparative perspective, which means if we compare the term with Neo-Germanism, Neo-Russianism and so on. Since we do not have this kind of neologisms for other countries that have a strong influence on international relations, Ćurak considers that the use of the term Neo-Ottomanism is exaggerated, because it deliberately associates some imperial times and attempts to read the present through some past historical actions.⁷⁵⁴ Additionally Ćurak believes that the concept of Neo-Ottomanism belongs to the register of completed history because Turkey is not present in the Balkans with any strong military contingents which are ready for violence, but with political and economic potential and pragmatic intention to strengthen its position in the known parts of the world thanks primarily to the economy.⁷⁵⁵

Albanian scholar Enis Sulstarova thinks that Turkey can use a cultural and historical element to facilitate acceptance of its influence in the region, but Neo-Ottomanism has

⁷⁵¹ **Ibid.**, 208.

⁷⁵² Ali Pajaziti, **Islamët Shqiptarë: Trendet, Lëvizjet dhe Aktorët e Rinj Islamik në Albanosferë në 25 Vitet e Tranzicionit : Një Vështrim Sociologjik**, (Shkup: Samizdat, 2018), 26.

⁷⁵³ Karabeg, "Polemika: Vodi li Turska", [24.02.2020].

⁷⁵⁴ **Ibid.**

⁷⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

nothing to do with the returning of Ottomans because history is known not to be repeated. Secondly, according to Sulstarova, Neo-Ottomanism (if we agree to name Turkey's aspiration in the region in this way), does not clash with the processes of Western Balkan countries' integration into the EU and NATO and has nothing to do with the supposed clash between Europe and the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵⁶

Similar attitudes towards Turkey's constructive approach to the Balkan region are affirmed also by university professor Ali Pajaziti. According to him, the current Turkish foreign policy has no Neo-Ottoman tendencies because the period of empires is over and today we are living in the period of nation states. It is a period of globalization, of a global village where the interaction of different values exists and of course the Turkish element or factor is active. In another period there may be another factor active. In this age of universalism it is impossible to close yourself like a "shell". Albanians are also subject to both Occidental and Oriental cultures, stressed Pajaziti.⁷⁵⁷

The thesis of Neo-Ottomanism was also rejected by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in an interview for the Albanian journal "Shenja". In the interview Davutoğlu emphasized that Turkey attaches great importance to peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkans. The speech given about recent Turkish foreign policy during a visit to Sarajevo in 2009 has been criticized in some circles with the invention of "Neo-Ottomanism". Davutoğlu says that Turkey does not have and cannot have such a policy.⁷⁵⁸ But, Turkey shares a common history and culture with the Balkan countries and no one can deny this. Turkey's historical perception of the region has been based on positive common elements. After all, the establishment of the 21st century order cannot be based on historical prejudices, states Davutoglu.⁷⁵⁹ Additionally, in realizing the vision of a better future shared with a positive and constructive perspective, it is natural for Turkey to benefit from elements of shared past with the Balkan countries. Despite the claim that Turkey seeks to link the Balkans with the East, Davutoğlu in the interview makes it clear that Turkey believes in the importance of integrating the Balkan countries

⁷⁵⁶ Enis Sulstarova, "Midis Turqisë dhe Evropës", **Ardhmeria**, http://ardhmeriaonline.com/artikull/article/midis-turqise-dhe-evropes/#.YGjr76_7TIU, [25.02.2020].

⁷⁵⁷ "Neo-Otomanizmi Turk në Ballkan", Emisioni Bota e re, **Alsati-M**, Qershor 2012.

⁷⁵⁸ "Interviste me Ministrin e Jashtëm të Turqisë Ahmet Davutoglu" ' Ndjehemi Krenar për Aleancën me Shqipërinë ' ", **Revista Shenja**, No.17 (September 2012): 19

⁷⁵⁹ **Ibid.**

into Euro-Atlantic institutions and supports any efforts in this regard. The latest and best example of this is Turkey's attempt to open the path of Bosnia and Herzegovina to her NATO membership.⁷⁶⁰

Despite differing views of academic and political circles on Turkish foreign policy, it can be said that peace and stability in the Balkans are very important factors for Turkey. The period when the issue of Neo-Ottomanism was actualized, Turkey was a candidate country that pretended EU integration and that mutual support for the achievement of common goals was more promising than drafting a competing policy that could cause an anti-EU climate. Another reason for Turkey's such approach is Turkey's domestic politics, more specifically a part of the Turkish population comes from the Balkan region and it's normal to express interest and attention in Turkey's relations with the Balkan countries.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned reasons, skeptics nonetheless had base to doubt Turkey's access to the Balkans. The basis of their suspicions was initially in the "Strategic Depth" book, where the author and then the foreign minister favored some nations such as Albanians and Bosniaks, suggesting the strengthening of their position in the Balkans as a basic option for Turkey to strengthen its position in this region. Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo in 2009 strengthened this skepticism even more when he spoke about glorious time of the Ottoman period in the Balkans. Part of the scholars and politicians in the Balkans defined the foreign minister's vision as emotional rather than real, returning to the glorious Ottoman past, in which today it is impossible to create a unifying policy from Baghdad to Belgrade, because the circumstances and the international system make it impossible.

3.2.4. Government-related Organizations as a Foreign Policy Tool of Turkey in Western Balkans

The beginning of the 21st century has brought another approach of influence of regional and global powers in different parts of the world. The use of coercive instruments such as the economic sanctions and military means have not always yielded successful results. For this reason, the need arose to use other means to achieve the goals of foreign

⁷⁶⁰ **Ibid.**

policy. States that had ambitions for regional and global influences, more and more, in addition to state-to-state communication began to apply the communication of state with citizens and civil society. This means that in the 21st century, in international relations, in addition to the classical communication between states, came to the fore the communication of states with the media and other non-governmental and individual entities. The main goal of the states would be to carry out activities in order to influence the foreign public. As part of this strategy, the most widely used tools were the activism of civil society in other countries, government-sponsored programs aimed at influencing and informing public opinion in other countries through cultural exchanges and media representatives, opening of various educational institutions, providing scholarships for international students, sports achievement, as well as the opening of cultural centers in various countries.

There are various examples of the use of these tools by powerful states. The USA is more active in this regard. In the field of culture through the music and especially movies where Hollywood has become a brand on global scale, it can be said that is a proof of its great influence. Within civil society, government-related organizations such as USAID⁷⁶¹ and Peace Corps⁷⁶² are entities that support various projects of different stakeholders in other states, mainly citizens, schools, media and non-governmental organizations. In the field of education, Fulbright scholarships are internationally prestigious scholarships won by the most distinguished students worldwide.⁷⁶³

The United Kingdom through the British Council aims to promote broad knowledge of the UK and the English language. It operates in over 100 countries: promoting and encouraging cultural, scientific, technological and educational cooperation with the UK.⁷⁶⁴ The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a British public service broadcaster which since April 1, 2014, it has also created the “BBC World Service, which broadcasts in 28 languages and offer wide TV, radio, and online services in the Arabic or Persian languages”.⁷⁶⁵ Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the

⁷⁶¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/>, [10.03.2020].

⁷⁶² <https://www.peacecorps.gov/>, [10.03.2020].

⁷⁶³ <https://foreign.fulbrightonline.org/>, [10.03.2020].

⁷⁶⁴ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>, [11.03.2020].

⁷⁶⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-radio-and-tv-12759931>, [11.03.2020].

UK public body which is committed to promote democracy around the world. WFD operates in more than 40 countries and works with parliaments, political parties, different NGO's as well as aims to help state during the elections in context of making their “political systems more fairer, inclusive, accountable and transparent”.⁷⁶⁶

While Germany through the Goethe-Institut as a non-profit German cultural association working in all the world with 159 institutes, aims to promote:

“The German language in different places and encourage international cultural exchange and relations. Around 246,000 people follow German courses per year. The Goethe-Institut promote knowledge about Germany by offering information on German culture, society and politics. This includes the exchange of films, music, theatre, and literature. Goethe cultural societies, reading rooms and language centers have played crucial role in the cultural and educational policies of Germany for more than 60 years.”⁷⁶⁷

Also in the civil sector The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit or GIZ in short (English: German Corporation for International Cooperation) is a German development agency that provides services in the field of international development cooperation. GIZ generally works with the private sector with the national and supranational government organizations on a public benefit basis. In its activities GIZ aims to follow:

“The paradigm of sustainable development, which is intended the economic development through social inclusion and environmental protection. GIZ provide consulting and capacity building services in a different sectors, from management consulting, rural development, sustainable infrastructure, security and peace-building, social development, governance and democracy, environment and climate change to economic development and employment.”⁷⁶⁸

France through Alliance Française or simply AF aims to promote “the French language and francophone culture around the world. In 2014, the Alliance had 850 centers in 137 countries, on each inhabited continent.”⁷⁶⁹

Even Russia is active through the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (In Russian: Rossotrudnichestvo). The activities of Rossotrudnichestvo aims at the implementation of the:

“State policy of international humanitarian cooperation, promotion abroad of an objective image of contemporary Russia. Nowadays, Rossotrudnichestvo is present in 80 states in the world with

⁷⁶⁶ <https://www.wfd.org/>, [11.03.2020].

⁷⁶⁷ <https://www.goethe.de/en/uun.html>, [11.03.2020].

⁷⁶⁸ https://www.giz.de/en/html/about_giz.html, [12.03.2020].

⁷⁶⁹ <https://af-france.fr/discover-alliance-francaise/>, [12.03.2020].

97 representative offices, including 72 Russian centers for science and culture in 62 states, 24 representatives of the Agency working in Russian Embassies in 21 states.”⁷⁷⁰

One of the most important goals of Rossotrudnichestvo is to promote Russian language abroad. Today, a lot of people all around the world have an opportunity to learn Russian with the help of Russian language courses at the offices of Rossotrudnichestvo in many countries around the world.⁷⁷¹

These are some of the countries with regional and global ambitions that in recent years through the above-mentioned organizations / agencies supported by governments, tend to influence the external audience. This implies that these states have understood that it is not enough as it was practice in the past to convince only the governments of states for a certain movement in foreign policy, but you must first convince its citizens, so the whole public opinion to accept that foreign policy movement. That is to say, today in order to raise and promote the international image of the state, you must establish multidimensional communication, which means communication with other governments, intellectuals, representatives of civil society, journalists, businessmen, etc. Following the trend of other countries and their success vis a vis the external audience, Turkey also found it reasonable to activate its government-related agencies. The pioneer of this strategy is the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) which was founded in the 1990's and then followed by the establishment of other agencies in the 2000's such as the Turkish Cultural Center Yunus Emre, Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities or in short YTB and other organizations. One difference from other states is the inclusion of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (In Turkish: Diyanet) in this strategy which has considerable influence on Muslim communities in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. In the following, will be elaborated the activities undertaken by these agencies and their impact in the framework of Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans.

3.2.4.1. TIKA

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, many new nation-states emerged such as Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan,

⁷⁷⁰ <http://rs.gov.ru/en/about>, [12.03.2020].

⁷⁷¹ **Ibid.**

Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan that shared common historical and cultural values with Turkey. These countries had a long way toward establishing market economies and initiating the process of reconstruction, development and international recognition by other states. In this context Turkey intended to support these countries through projects for their social, economic and cultural development.⁷⁷²

For this purpose TİKA was founded in 1992,

“with the Statutory Decree Law Nr. 480 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1999 it was entrusted to the Prime Ministry with a Presidential Order, and in 2001, the organization’s body of rules were put into force with the publication of the Law no 4668 on the “Organization and Tasks of Turkish Cooperation and Development Administration Directorate.”⁷⁷³

In the 2000's, TİKA was developed in order to become an integral part of Turkish Foreign Policy. Its activity area was expanded in different regions such as the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. Today, TİKA is committed in “numerous development cooperation activities in 150 countries through its 62 Programme Coordination Offices located in 60 countries across 5 continents.”⁷⁷⁴ It should be mentioned that focus began to shift from aid provision to technical assistance, capacity building for institutions and human development activities.⁷⁷⁵ Regarding the region of the Western Balkans, it is worth noting that during the 1990s TİKA had only one coordination office in the region, more concretely in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After 2002, TİKA is present in all countries of this region such as Bosnia and Herzegovina Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro.⁷⁷⁶

One of the first countries in the Balkans in which TİKA has had an active approach with the implementation of various projects has been Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since the end of the Bosnian war in 1995, TİKA has been present in this country. According to the Acting President of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) Serkan Kayalar TİKA has been supporting the development processes of Bosnia and Herzegovina with more than 900 projects and activities in a period of 25 years.⁷⁷⁷ While

⁷⁷² https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/page/history_of_tika-8526, [15.03.2020].

⁷⁷³ **Ibid.**

⁷⁷⁴ **Ibid.**

⁷⁷⁵ **Ibid.**

⁷⁷⁶ Muhasilović, “Turkey’s Soft Power and Public Diplomacy”, 91.

⁷⁷⁷ “TİKA Deputy President Serkan Kayalar: “We Implemented Approximately 800 Projects in the First 6 Months of This Year”, **TİKA**,

TİKA Sarajevo Program Coordinator Ömer Faruk Alımcı has emphasized that about 82 million dollars have been spent for the realization of these activities and projects.⁷⁷⁸

Immediately after the war, TİKA implemented a good number of projects that helped BiH in different sectors, such as improving its health, education, culture, agriculture etc. In the field of education, TİKA undertook projects to renovate and supply Bosnian schools with technological and infrastructural means. The agency still continues to supply BiH with Turkey's experience in the education sector from kindergardens to colleges.⁷⁷⁹

Taking into consideration that the preservation of cultural heritage is on the top of the priorities, TİKA took the responsibility for the reconstruction of the Emperor's Mosque in Sarajevo during 2014-2015 that cost around 1.3 million euros. The list of historical Ottoman monuments restored by TİKA also includes the Šarena Mosque in Tuzla, the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad, the State Archives in Sarajevo, the house where the Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović was born in Bosanski Šamac and the reparation of Trebinje Cultural Center, which is considered among the most modern cultural centers in the Balkans that cost around 2 million euro.⁷⁸⁰

TİKA also offered help to the displaced families to return back to their homes that they abandoned during the conflict. With the "Food and Life Support Program" initiated in 2017, TİKA supported around 1,000 families by ensuring them with agricultural equipment and training for various farming and ranching methods.⁷⁸¹

Aiming to assist Bosnia-Herzegovina in keeping the unemployment percentage low, TİKA contributed in the creation of the Gradacac Vocational Training Center in 2018, which provides occupational trainings for qualified labour force for production industries and increase employment. Whereas in the health sector, TİKA supervised the

https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tika_deputy_president_serkan_kayalar_we_implemented_approximately_800_projects_in_the_first_6_months_of_this_year-52404, [18.03.2020].

⁷⁷⁸ "Prezentovani Projekti i Aktivnosti TİKA-e u Bosni i Hercegovini", **Biznis**, 20.03.2019, <http://biznis.ba/prezentovani-projekti-i-aktivnosti-tika-e-u-bosni-i-hercegovini/>, [18.03.2020].

⁷⁷⁹ "TİKA Carries out 900 Projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 24 Years", **Daily Sabah**, 01.01.2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2020/01/09/tika-helps-bosnia-herzegovina-with-900-projects-in-24-years>, [19.03.2020].

⁷⁸⁰ Stepan Santrucek, "Turkish Aid Pays Dividends for Erdogan in Bosnia", **Balkan Crossroads**, 14.06.2019, <https://www.balkancrossroads.com/turkish-aid-pays-dividends>, [18.03.2020],

⁷⁸¹ "TİKA Carries out 900 Projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 24 Years", [19.03.2020].

construction and renovation of some clinics, including Sarajevo University's Hematology clinic and Krusevac community clinic.⁷⁸²

During a meeting between the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Edin Mušić, with the director of TİKA for BiH Omer Faruk Alimci, Mušić stressed that TİKA's contribution to the reconstruction of BiH is huge. TİKA throughout all this time has supported all levels of government. Their sincere commitment to helping all peoples in BiH is a strategic value. Mušić expressed his appreciation for the work and engagement of TİKA in BiH so far, and from their position expressed their support for future activities they plan in BiH.⁷⁸³

The second coordination office of TİKA in Western Balkans was opened in 2002 in Tirana, but with the implementation of projects, TİKA in Albania has been present since 1996. According to Anadolu Agency, from 1996 to 2018 the total number of projects implementation in Albania goes to 447. The areas in which TİKA has contributed in Albania are mainly in education, health, infrastructure and protection of cultural heritage.⁷⁸⁴ TİKA since 2003 has continued to increase the number of its projects and activities in Albania, where so far it has implemented 44 projects in the health sector, such as restoration of hospitals and health centers, providing equipment and establishing laboratories for medical analysis.⁷⁸⁵ In the field of infrastructure and social services in Albania, TİKA has implemented 207 projects, mainly in administrative and civil infrastructure, supporting cultural cooperation activities and cooperation with civil society organizations.⁷⁸⁶ In the field of education, TİKA has implemented 105 projects, among them, the construction of the building of the Madrasa "Haxhi Sheh Shamia" in Shkodra, supplying with educational equipment and renovation of the high school "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk" in Vlora, renovation of the library of the Faculty of History and Philology of the University of Tirana, the building "Librat Akademik" of the Academy of Sciences of Albania, reconstruction the library and conference room of the

⁷⁸² **Ibid.**

⁷⁸³ "Predsjedavajući Mušić Održao Sastanak sa Predstavnicima TİKA-e za BiH", 28.03.2018, <https://predstavnickidom-pfbih.gov.ba/bs/page.php?id=1832>, [18.03.2020].

⁷⁸⁴ Xhihad Aliu, "TİKA ka Realizuar 447 Projekte në Shqipëri", **Anadolu Agency**, 20.12.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkan/tika-ka-realizuar-447-projekte-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri/1343959>, [16.03.2020].

⁷⁸⁵ **Ibid.**

⁷⁸⁶ **Ibid.**

Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Tirana. TİKA also submitted to the General Directorate of Archives of Albania electronic devices to be used in the digitization of archives, mainly the Ottoman ones.⁷⁸⁷ In order to preserve the common historical heritage and provide support for the development of cultural tourism in Albania, TİKA has undertaken the restoration of many mosques and historical and cultural heritage sites in the country. It is worth mentioning that in 2014 were finished the restoration of Murad Bey mosque, the Mosque in Preza Castle, Naziresha Mosque in Elbasan, Iljaz Bey Mirahori Mosque in Korça and the Plumbi Mosque in Berat.⁷⁸⁸

In March 2018, during the promotion of the project that has to do with support for the Tirana Firefighters Department, the Turkish Ambassador to Albania Murat Ahmet Yörük emphasized that the projects that have been implemented since 1996 exceed the number 400. These projects are distributed in various sectors, such as education, health, infrastructure and social services.⁷⁸⁹ While the mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj appreciated the continuous contribution given by the Turkish government in improving the infrastructure and modernize the firefighters service. He stressed that today the most important thing to say is the expression of gratitude. According to Veliaj, real help is the one which is practical, concrete and useful. He expressed his satisfaction for this brotherhood that Albania has with Turkey.⁷⁹⁰ According to the booklet of 2019 of Turkey's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the amount spent on the realization of these projects since 1996 reaches about 85 million dollars.⁷⁹¹

TİKA also has been present in Kosovo since 2004, providing support with projects in various fields, in a period when Kosovo was not yet a sovereign and independent state. TİKA in Kosovo has contributed in restoration of Ottoman mosques and supported projects in fields such as health care, water supply and agriculture. According to former Turkish Ambassador to Kosovo Kivilcim Kiliç, by the end of 2016, TİKA with 600

⁷⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

⁷⁸⁸ **Ibid.**

⁷⁸⁹ “Pajisje të Reja e Moderne për shërbimin Zjarrfikës të Tiranës”, 13.03.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6VdoOlkyTo&feature=emb_title, [16.04.2020].

⁷⁹⁰ “TİKA Vazhdon të Ndihmojë Institucionet në Shqipëri”, **TRT**, 21.03.2018, <https://www.trt.net.tr/shqip/ballkani/2018/03/21/tika-vazhdon-te-ndihmoje-institucionet-ne-shqiperi-934589>, [16.03.2020].

⁷⁹¹ “2019 Yılına Girerken Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükûmet Sisteminde Girişimci ve İnsani Dış Politikamız”, **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı**, 2019, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/site_media/html/2019-yilina-girerken-girisimci-ve-insani-dis-politikamiz.pdf, 54, [17.04.2020].

developed projects and through the official development assistance by the Republic of Turkey, has contributed to the development to the economy of Kosovo, with about 100 million dollars.⁷⁹²

Ambassador Kiliç has emphasized that TİKA is not an agency that deals only with the restoration of cultural heritage, but has developed around 600 projects in areas such as education, health, agriculture, reducing the number of unemployed, developing employment opportunities for women. These projects has significantly helped Kosovo's economy. Ambassador stressed that only 7 from 600 projects, belong to mosque restorations. In the sector of healthcare assistance, Ambassador Kiliç said that TİKA in 2012 donated 5 ambulance vehicles, in Shtimje was renovated the family medicine center and also was provided logistical assistance for the training to Kosovo health staff in Turkey.⁷⁹³ She added that TİKA also has important projects in the field of education in renovating and equipping schools and various educational institutions. TİKA has made numerous contributions to Kosovar farmers and women's associations, and also in other areas such as the institute of forensic medicine and renovating the Constitutional Court.⁷⁹⁴

During the inauguration of the project “Inventory Equipment Project and Installation of the Sensory Room in the Center of the Autism Association” which was supported by TİKA, the mayor of Pristina Shpend Ahmeti thanked the state of Turkey and TİKA for the continuous assistance they provide for the solution of social problems in Kosovo. He said that this center "is just an introduction" for the joint funding that will be realized with TİKA, for an center of municipality for children with autism and down syndrome.⁷⁹⁵

Since 2005 TİKA also has been present in Macedonia. From this year until the beginning of 2019, TİKA has implemented about 900 projects in various fields, such as education, health, infrastructure and protection of cultural heritage. In Macedonia, TİKA

⁷⁹² Sibel Vezaj, “Ambasadorja Kiliç: Turqia do të Vazhdojë me Qëndrueshmëri Mbështetjen për Kosovën”, **Anadolu Agency**, 26.08.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/gunun-basliklari/ambasadorja-kilic-turqia-do-t%C3%AB-vazhdoj%C3%AB-me-q%C3%ABndrueshm%C3%ABri-mb%C3%ABshtetjen-p%C3%ABr-kosov%C3%ABn/635873>, [18.03.2020].

⁷⁹³ **Ibid.**

⁷⁹⁴ **Ibid.**

⁷⁹⁵ Sibel Vezaj, “TIKA Pajis Qendrën e Shoqatës Autizmi në Prishtinë”, **Anadolu Agency**, 09.10.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkan/tika-pajis-qendr%C3%ABn-e-shoqat%C3%ABs-autizmi-n%C3%AB-prishtin%C3%AB/1277013>, [17.03.2020].

has renovated 38 primary, secondary and university schools, from which 24 have been repaired and 14 have been built, serving about 15,000 students.⁷⁹⁶

Within the field of health, TİKA has renovated hospitals and health centers and has implemented support projects by providing medical equipment and hospital furniture. In this regard, this agency has carried out the repair and supply of hygiene and sterilization department at the largest hospital in Macedonia "Mother Teresa" in Skopje.⁷⁹⁷ For the economic development of the country, TİKA strongly supported the field of agronomy with projects for vegetable development in Serra in eastern Macedonia, projects for beekeeping development, projects for improving the quality of rice and production and the projects for the development of arboriculture.⁷⁹⁸

In order to preserve the common historical and cultural heritage and support the development of cultural tourism in Macedonia, TİKA has taken the responsibility on restoration of many mosques and historical heritage in this country. In the village of Koxhaxhik in the municipality of Centar Zhupa TİKA implemented the project "Museum House of Ali Riza Efendi", the father of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and repaired the building of the Military Academy in Bitola, where Atatürk the founder of modern Turkey was educated between 1896 and 1899. TİKA enriched the cultural heritage by completing restoration projects of the Ishak Çelebi Mosque in Bitola, the Husein Shah Mosque in Skopje, the Mustafa Pasha Mosque in Skopje and the Mahmud Aga Mosque in Radanje, while in the process of restoration is the Sultan Murad Mosque and the Allaxha Mosque in Skopje.⁷⁹⁹

TİKA also implement projects which aim the developing and supporting the Turkish language in Macedonia. The agency supports the activities on the celebration of the Turkish Language Education Day in Macedonia on December 21. This event since 2008 is organized by the Association of Turkish Non-Governmental Associations in

⁷⁹⁶ Xhihad Aliu, "TİKA ka Realizuar mbi 900 Projekte në Maqedoni", **Anadolu Agency**, 21.12.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkan/tika-ka-realizuar-mbi-900-projekte-n%C3%AB-maqedoni/1344971>, [17.03.2020].

⁷⁹⁷ **Ibid.**

⁷⁹⁸ **Ibid.**

⁷⁹⁹ **Ibid.**

Macedonia (MATÜSITEB), an network organization composed by more than 50 Turkish associations operating in this country.⁸⁰⁰

In March 2019, the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Gjorge Ivanov, awarded TİKA with the " Order of Merit". The award was given for significant contribution of TİKA in improving the well-being of Macedonian citizens, capacity building of the institutions of the Republic of Macedonia and the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Turkey.⁸⁰¹ Ivanov in his speech said that TİKA in Macedonia has implemented more than 900 projects worth approximately € 60 million in the field of health, education, environment, infrastructure and other areas.⁸⁰²

While the current President of the Republic of Macedonia Stevo Pendarovski emphasizes that TİKA through the projects that implements, helps some of the vulnerable categories of citizens, namely children, sick and poor people. Pendarovski stressed that TİKA in Macedonia contributes to various areas such as education, health or agriculture. According to him, TİKA over the years has become a recognizable symbol of Turkish solidarity, not only with Turks or Muslims, but with all citizens of Macedonia, regardless of their ethnic, religious or ethnic affiliation.⁸⁰³

Following the declaration of Montenegro's independence in 2006, one year later TİKA opened its office in Podgorica. According to TİKA coordinator in Montenegro, Enver Resuloğulları, until 2019 the agency has implemented 320 projects. The projects worth more than €20 million have been implemented in the fields of cultural heritage,

⁸⁰⁰ **Ibid.**

⁸⁰¹“Иванов и Додели ‘Повелба на Република Македонија’ на Турската Агенција за Соработка и Координација – ТИКА”, **Makfax**, 27.03.2019, <https://makfax.com.mk/makedonija/ivanov-dodeli-povelba-na-republika-m>, [18.03.2020].

⁸⁰² “Иванов и Додели Повелба на Турската Агенција за Соработка и Координација – ТИКА”, **Observer**, 27.03.2019, <https://opserver.mk/makedonija/ivanov-i-dodeli-povelba-na-turskata-agencija-za-sorabotka-i-koordinacija-tika/>, [18.03.2020].

⁸⁰³ “Турската Агенција за Соработка и Координација (ТИКА) Приреди Ифтар во Скопје”, **TRT**, 29.05.2019, <https://www.trt.net.tr/makedonski/rieghion/2019/05/29/turskata-aghientsija-za-sorabotka-i-koordinatsija-tika-prriedi-iftar-vo-skopjie-1210513>, [18.03.2020].

education, health care, agriculture, infrastructure improvement and employment support.⁸⁰⁴

From the overall number of completed projects, more than 40 projects have been implemented in the health care sector. The most important were the adaptation and equipping of the emergency department of the Clinical Centre of Montenegro as well as the adaptation of the Ophthalmology Clinic.⁸⁰⁵

In the field of agriculture TİKA supplied 50 families with greenhouses to support vegetable cultivation. The greenhouses were provided to farmer families in the northern Sandzak, dominated mainly by Bosnian and Albanian families. It should be emphasized that until 2019 TİKA has reached more than 2,000 people through different rural development projects in fields such as livestock, orchardman, viticulture, etc.⁸⁰⁶

In order to promote and support the development of cultural tourism in Montenegro, TİKA took the responsibility on restoration of many constructions inherited from the Ottoman Empire. It can be distinguished the restoration of the Nizam Mosque in Podgorica⁸⁰⁷, restoration of the Ottoman clock tower in Podgorica⁸⁰⁸, construction of the garden wall of the historic Hüseyin Pasha Mosque in Pljevlja in Sandzak region⁸⁰⁹, restoration of the Ali Pasha Bath in Ulcinj which is the unique of its kind in Montenegro.⁸¹⁰

During the last meeting in Podgorica between the President of Montenegro Milo Đukanović and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Đukanović

⁸⁰⁴ Adel Omeragic, “Crna Gora: TİKA Finansirala Rekonstrukciju Sportske Sale u Gimnaziji u Tuzima”, **Anadolu Agency**, 25.04.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/crna-gora-tika-finansirala-rekonstrukciju-sportske-sale-u-gimnaziji-u-tuzima-/1462364>, [19.03.2020].

⁸⁰⁵ “TİKA in Montenegro: 300 Projects Worth €20m Implemented”, **CDM**, 10.07.2017, <https://www.cdm.me/english/tika-montenegro-300-projects-worth-e20m-implemented/>, [18.03.2020].

⁸⁰⁶ Tevfik Durul, “Turkish Agency Supports Farming Projects in Montenegro”, **Anadolu Agency**, 21.10.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkish-agency-supports-farming-projects-in-montenegro/1621198>, [18.03.2020].

⁸⁰⁷ “Türkiye Balkanlar'daki Osmanlı Yedigârı Eserlere Sahip Çıkıyor”, **TİKA**, https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/turkiye_balkanlar_daki_osmanli_yedigari_eserlere_sahip_cikiyor-33056, [19.03.2020].

⁸⁰⁸ “Karadağ'daki Osmanlı Mirası Saat Kulesinin Restorasyonu Başladı”, **Zambak**, 11.04.2017, <http://www.zambak.ba/karadag39-daki-osmanli-mirasi-saat-kulesinin-restorasyonu-basladi-5203h.htm>, [19.03.2020].

⁸⁰⁹ “Karadağ'da Hüseyin Paşa Camii TİKA Tarafından Koruma Altına Alınıyor”, **TİKA**, https://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/karadag%27da_huseyin_pasa_camii_tika_tarafından_koruma_altına_aliniyor-37841, [18.03.2020].

⁸¹⁰ “Karadağ'daki Osmanlı Mirası TİKA Tarafından Restore Ediliyor”, **Time Balkan**, 29.01.2016, <http://timebalkan.com/karadagdaki-osmanli-mirasi-tika-tarafından-restore-ediliyor/>, [19.03.2020].

expressed his gratitude for the development assistance of the Turkish agency TİKA, as an important aid for the development of Montenegro.⁸¹¹

TİKA's newest office in the Western Balkans has opened in Serbia. With the signing of the Agreement on October 26, 2009, TİKA office in Belgrade began with its activities. TİKA in Serbia acts as a mechanism of cooperation between public institutions, universities, the private sector. According to coordinator of TİKA office in Serbia, Çağla Gültekin Tosbat, until 2019 in Serbia were implemented 268 projects in the field of education, health care, social infrastructure, capacity building, cultural cooperation and preservation of common cultural heritage.⁸¹² Coordinator of the TİKA's office in Serbia explain that of the total \$ 48.8 million of development assistance provided by Turkey to Serbia, \$ 30.8 million of this assistance was realized through TİKA.⁸¹³

TİKA's most distinguished projects in preserving the common cultural and historical heritage in Serbia are the restoration of Ram fortress which is one of the seven fortresses on Danube shore, restoration of the Sultan Valide Mosque in Sjenica, restoration of the Small Stairs at Kalemegdan in Belgrade, restoration of the drinking fountain of Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic, restoration of Damat Ali Pasha tomb etc.⁸¹⁴

In the health sector can be mentioned projects like the rehabilitation of the gynecological obstetric ward of the General Hospital in Novi Pazar, donation of beds to Gerontology Center in Belgrade, renovation and equipping of the Health Center in Sjenica, donation of equipment to Priboj General Hospital, donation of equipment to University Children's Clinic in Belgrade etc.⁸¹⁵

TİKA's biggest contribution in Serbia is in the field of education. The most distinguished projects in this field are the support of King Peter I School with inventory as a school bench and chairs, facade renovation of Raška Elementary School, increasing the capacity of the Textile School in Novi Pazar with sewing and printing machines,

⁸¹¹ "Turska Otvara Fondaciju za Mlade i Povećava Broj Stipendija za Crnogorske Studente", **Kodex**, 11.02.2020, <https://kodex.me/clanak/202349/turska-otvara-fondaciju-za-mlade-i-povecava-broj-stipendija-za-crnogorske-studente>, [19.03.2020].

⁸¹² "TİKA u Srbiji Realizovala 268 Projekata", **RTS**, 05.10.2019, <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/13/ekonomija/3686030/tika-u-srbiji-realizovala-268-projekata.html>, [20.03.2020].

⁸¹³ **Ibid.**

⁸¹⁴ https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2017/YAYINLAR/Tan%C4%B1t%C4%B1m%20Bro%C5%9F%C3%BCrleri/S%C4%B1rbistan%202017/TİKA%20Sirbistan_2017.pdf, [20.03.2020].

⁸¹⁵ **Ibid.**

construction of facilities and equipping of Primary School Dušan Tomašević Ćirko in Velika Župa- Prijepolje, increasing the capacity of the library of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade, construction and equipping of the Elementary school in Novi Pazar etc.⁸¹⁶

TIKA has also made its contribution in the field of strengthening administrative and civil capacity. It can be mentioned the reconstruction and equipping of a home for orphaned children with disabilities Dragan Filipović Jusa, reconstruction and equipping of the police department in Usce, TIKA Vrbaš Park Friendship, providing wood heat for 150 Bosniak and Serb families in the region of Novi Pazar, Tutin, Sjenica, Priboj, Prijepolje and Nova Varoš.⁸¹⁷

In one of the meetings between the President of the Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić and the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey Tanju Bilgiç, Serbian president has given his full support to various projects of the agency, such as renovation of the Novi Pazar High Court building and reconstruction of the Belgrade maternity hospital in Zvecanska Street.⁸¹⁸

3.2.4.2. nus Emre

Another government-related organization that is present in the Balkans is the Yunus Emre Institute. YEI was founded in 2009 by the Yunus Emre Foundation which was established in 2007, “under the law dated 05.05.2007 and numbered 5653 to promote Turkey, Turkish language, its history, culture and art in other countries.”⁸¹⁹

Starting with the activities in 2009, YEI has 58 cultural centers in 48 countries. Through the cultural centers a good number of activities are organized to promote Turkey and the Turkish culture and art through national or international events.⁸²⁰

As for the Balkan region, the projects, activities and partnerships of the YEI have most intensely been focused in this region. According to the YEI annual report for 2018, out

⁸¹⁶ **Ibid.**

⁸¹⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸¹⁸ “Vučić Pozvao Erdogana u Srbiju, Podrška Projektima TIKA”, **B92**, 28.04.2017, https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=04&dd=28&nav_category=11&nav_id=1255088, [20.03.2020].

⁸¹⁹ “Yunus Emre Institute”, <https://www.yee.org.tr/en/corporate/yunus-emre-institute>, [21.03.2020].

⁸²⁰ **Ibid.**

of 58 cultural centers in 8 regions (Middle East, Far East, Africa, America, Asia, Europe, Australia and the Balkans) 15 cultural centers (in percentage it turns out to be 25% from overall centers) are opened in the Balkans.⁸²¹

In this context, in 2009 the first two Yunus Emre cultural centers were opened in the Balkans, more exactly in Sarajevo and Tirana. In 2010 was opened the third cultural center in Skopje, in 2011 in Constanca, Bucharest, Fojnica, Prizren and Prishtina, in 2012 in Peja and Shkodra, in 2014 in Mostar and Podgorica and in 2015 in Komrat, Belgrade and Zagreb.⁸²² Only three countries in the whole Balkan region where Yunus Emre Institute doesn't have an active center are Bulgaria, Greece, and Slovenia.⁸²³

YEI through the cultural centers works in 4 areas, namely in Turkish Teaching, Cultural and Art activities, Science and Academy and Cultural Diplomacy. It should be noted that according to the annual reports of the YEI, the largest number of activities are carried out in the first two areas. In terms of Cultural and Art Activities, according to YEI statistics from year to year they have been increasing. In 2009 only 15 activities were recorded, while in 2018 were implemented 908 activities. The 2018 report shows that out of the total number of activities, 30% are implemented in the Balkan region.⁸²⁴ Also, according to previous reports of YEI the cultural centers in Balkan region have dominated with projects and activities comparing with other regions. For example, the annual report of 2017 shows that from 887 activities of YEI, 36% of these activities have been realized in the cultural centers in the Balkans, that reflect the largest percentage.⁸²⁵ In 2016, from 796 activities carried out, 36% were realized in the Balkan region.⁸²⁶ As for the reports of previous years from 2009 to 2015, are evidenced only the number of implemented activities without dividing them in percentages by regions.

⁸²¹ "Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2018", https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2018_faaliyet_raporu_rev_0111-db-250320.pdf, 14, [21.03.2020].

⁸²² *Ibid*, 15.

⁸²³ Muhasilović, "Turkey's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy", 112.

⁸²⁴ "Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2018", 22

⁸²⁵ "Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2017", <https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2017-faaliyet-raporu-27.11.2018-dusuk-boyut.pdf>, 22, [22.03.2020].

⁸²⁶ "Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2016", https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2016_faaliyet_raporu_05.02.2018-db.pdf, 24, [22.03.2020].

In terms of the content of Cultural and Art Activities, mostly have been realized exhibitions, conferences, courses, movie shows, special day celebrations, concerts, festivals, workshops, stage and performing arts, social activities, symposiums, folk dances etc.⁸²⁷

⁸²⁷ Some of the most distinguished activities at Yunus Emre cultural centers in the Western Balkans can be highlighted, starting from the cultural center in Belgrade where it is worth noting the Tahir Aydogdu Trio Concert, Turkish Talks, European Language Day Activities,(2018); Lecture Series “Modern Turkey, the Balkans and Europe, Turcology Conference, 15 July Events (2017); Symposium on “State and Society in the Balkans Before and After the Ottoman Empire”, (2016). In Yunus Emre cultural center in Foynitsa can be highlighted the” Ney and Rebap Concert”, Foynitsa Culture Talks, Web & Graphic Design Course, (2018); Film Screenings, Traditional Ramadan Iftars, (2017); Sufi Music Concert in Foynitsa, (2016) ; Screening of “The End of the Çanakkale Road” Movie in Foynitsa, (2015). Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Shkodra carried out projects like Art Courses, Ottoman basic course, Panel discussion “From past to present Turkey - Albania Relations”,(2018); Film Screening, Turkey Days in Shkodra, Shkodra Yunus Emre Institute Interview, Presentation of Ottoman State Archives in Shkodra, (2017); Nasreddin Hoca in Shkoder, “Istanbul in My Dream” Painting Competition, (2016); Second consecutive event of “Turkey Days” in Shkodra, (2015). Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Prishtina implemented projects like Ottoman Turkish Course, 23 April Kosovo Turks National Day, (2018); International Poetry Festival, Pristina Film Festival, (2017); Carpet Weaving Courses in Kosovo, Women's Day Concert in Pristina; Itri and Bach Inspirations Concert. In the second Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Kosovo in the city of Prizren can be highlighted projects like Ottoman Turkish course, (2018); Photography Club, Ottoman Turkish Course, Prizren the City of Mosques Book Promotion Program, (2017); Wooden Painting Course for the Disabled people in Prizren, (2016); Piano and Flute Concert in Prizren, (2015). While in the third Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Kosovo, in the city of Peja it can be mentioned projects like Albanian Music Women's Choir (2018); Photography Club, Turkish Cinema Days in Peje, Mehmet Akif Ersoy Talks, (2017); Photography Course in Peje, (2016); Turkish Cinema Screenings and Semih Kaplanoglu Interview. In Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Mostar were realized projects like Çanakale Martyrs Remembrance Day Events, Turkish Cinema Days, Turkish Song Contest, Karaoke Day, (2018); July 15 Coup Attempt Panel and Photograph Exhibition, Eid and Ramadan in Bosnian and Turkish Literature, Bayrampasa Bosnian Culture Night, (2017); Karagöz-Hacivat Shadow Play Festival, (2016). Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Podgorica carried out projects like Turkish Film Screenings, Panel in a topic “Ottoman Architecture in the Balkans”, Tivat Street Arts Festival, 4th International Podgoritsa Book Fair, "Turkish Film Days", (2018); Panel on “Ottoman Period Librarianship in Ulcinj and Kadi Hüsein Mujali”, Ottoman Period Clothing Fashion Show, Turkish Folk Dance Show, Turkish Folk Music Concert, (2017); “Turkey Days” Program in Montenegro, Promotion of Turkish food in Podgorica,(2016); Introducing Traditional Ottoman Cuisine, (2015). While in Yunus Emre Institute in Sarajevo were implemented projects like International Book Fair, European Day of Languages, Bosnia and Herzegovina Statehood Day Exhibition, International Friendship Short Film Festival - Bosnia and Herzegovina Reflection, (2018); Ottoman Turkish Course, Sarajevo International Book, Srebrenica Memorial Day, Ramadan Evenings Concert,(2017); Turkish Music Evening in Sarajevo,(2016); Painting and Sculpture Exhibition in Sarajevo, (2015). In Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Tirana it can be distinguished the Yunus Emre Talks, International Jazz Concert, Ottoman Course, Turkish Film Week, Çanakkale Trip, (2018); Turkish Film Day, Folk Dance Show, Yunus Emre Talks, Book Fair, (2017); "Turkish Games Show" Program in Tirana(2016); Pianist Tuluyhan Uğurlu Concert in Tirana, (2015). And lastly in Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Skopje can be highlighted Library Talks, Manaki Film Festival, Turkology Meetings, Kids Club, (2018); "Turkish Folk Dances" Show, Library Talks, Skopje Summer Festival " Opening Concert ", Skopje Tea and Herb Festival, (2017); Rumeli Palace Music Concert in Skopje, (2016); Kerem Görsev Trio Concert, (2015). These are just a few of the activities carried out in the field of culture and art within the YEİ. For more details, as well as the rest of the activities carried out through cultural centers in the Western Balkans, see the annual reports of the YEİ.
https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2018_faaliyet_raporu_rev_0111-db-250320.pdf;
<https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2017-faaliyet-raporu-27.11.2018-dusuk-boyut.pdf>,

As for the participation in Turkish language courses, Yunus Emre cultural centers offer Turkish courses for different groups at different levels, upon request. In addition to general Turkish courses, Yunus Emre cultural centers provide courses for special purpose such as business Turkish, Turkish for children, translation classes. The annual report of YEI for 2018 shows that between 2009 and 2018 there have been constant increase and interest for the Turkish language. In 2009 a total of 219 people attended in the Turkish language courses, while in 2018 there were 15182 people. From the statistics of 2018, by the total number of students from all the cultural centers of Yunus Emre, 30% of the students have been from the Balkan region, which means the highest percentage compared with other regions.⁸²⁸ According to YEI's 2017 annual report, by 12,323 students who participated in the Turkish language course, again, 30% were from the Balkan region, the largest percentage of students compared with other regions.⁸²⁹ Even in 2016 the largest attendance in the Turkish courses were from the Balkans. By 11,999 students, 34% of them were from the Yunus Emre cultural centers located in the Balkans.⁸³⁰ While the 2015 annual report of YEI shows that 8628 students have attended Turkish language courses in all YEI centers. In this report there is no statistical data in percentages by regions in terms of participation in Turkish courses.⁸³¹ In 2014, 9,305 students attended the Turkish course of which 33% were from the Balkan region. In 2013, there were 7366 students of which 28% from the Balkan region. In 2012, from 5,795 students, 22% were from the Balkans. In 2011, out of 3159 students, 36% were from the Balkans. In 2010, there were 1221 students, of which 35% were from the Balkans. And in 2009, which is the first year of the establishment of the YEI, all 235

https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2016_faaliyet_raporu_05.02.2018-db.pdf,
<https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/yayin/2015-faaliyet-raporu>, <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/yayin/2014-faaliyet-raporu>,
⁸²⁸ Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2018”,https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2018_faaliyet_raporu_rev_0111-db-250320.pdf, 81, [21.03.2020].

⁸²⁹ “Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2017”,
<https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2017-faaliyet-raporu-27.11.2018-dusuk-boyut.pdf>, 86, [22.03.2020].

⁸³⁰ “Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2016”,
https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2016_faaliyet_raporu_05.02.2018-db.pdf, 67, [22.03.2020].

⁸³¹ Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faliyet Raportu 2015”,
https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/2015_yili_faaliyet_raporu.pdf, 196, [24.03.2020].

students followed the Turkish language courses in the Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Sarajevo.⁸³²

The data from the annual reports of YEI show that based to the regional distribution of the foreign students, Balkan region lead by providing 1/3 of all foreign students, followed by Asia with 22 percent, Africa 19 percent, and the Middle East with 18 percent. This shows that every year, comparing with other regions, the Balkans secured the leadership when it comes to the percentage of students who have expressed interest to follow the Turkish language courses in YEI.⁸³³ To have a clear picture to the end, these percentages refer only to the pursuit of the Turkish language in the cultural centers of Yunus Emre. Meanwhile, in general, the peoples of the Balkans are more interested in learning English and German. Especially, the German language has been in trend in recent years due to the German state policy of providing employment opportunities in Germany for the peoples of the Balkans.⁸³⁴

Meantime, learning Turkish can also be interpreted as a mutual benefit. On the one hand, Turkey through the language and cultural projects wants to promote a common cultural heritage by trying to break down the barriers caused by the stereotypes originating from the Ottoman Empire. With this approach, it seems that Turkey wants to influence in the people of the Balkans through the culture and language in order to penetrate in this region more easily. In the same line of thought is Muharrem Ekşi, claiming that formulation of a strategy based on cultural diplomacy provides to Turkey a new area of power. According to Ekşi:

“By following a policy in the cultural sphere, Turkey builds its relations and creates a positive interaction on the community level in the Balkans and obtains a chance of manoeuvre to increase its influence on a broader area than other regional or global powers.”⁸³⁵

⁸³² Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Faaliyet Raporu 2014”, <https://www.yee.org.tr/sites/default/files/yayin/faaliyet-raporu.pdf>, 77, [25.03.2020].

⁸³³ Muhasilović, “Turkey’s Soft Power and Public Diplomacy”, 117.

⁸³⁴ According to the Goethe Institute in Skopje, which is responsible for coordinating the Western Balkans, from 2016 until now there are more and more students interested in learning German, but also for entering the exam for the level of knowledge of the language that opens the door to study, work or for family reunification in Germany. For more see: Marija Sevrjeva, “Сè Повеќе Македонци Учат Германски Јазик”, **Deutsche Welle**, 05.09.2019, <https://www.dw.com/mk/B5-av-50300294>, [20.03.2021].

⁸³⁵ Muharrem Ekşi, “Turkey’s Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power Policy Toward the Balkans”, **Karadeniz Araştırmaları**, Vol. 14, No. 55 (2017): 198.

On the other hand, the people from the Balkans are aware of Turkish expansion in various sectors and learning Turkish language would be a great benefit during their employment in Turkish companies and institutions. Apart from this, a large number of students learn Turkish at cultural centers in order to continue their academic journey at one of the universities in Turkey. In this connotation, Ahmet Davutoğlu, in his capacity as foreign minister during the opening of the first Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Sarajevo, states that:

“Turkey carefully chose the location where the first Yunus Emre Cultural Center would be opened, and it was no coincidence that it was Sarajevo. If one were to ask which is the place that reflects Turkish culture in the best way, this would be Sarajevo. Sarajevo and Istanbul are similar cities. Kapali čaršija and Baščaršija, Blue mosque and Gazi Husrev Beg's mosque. We carry a similar culture, we consume similar food. And that is why Sarajevo was chosen.”⁸³⁶

Additionally Davutoglu says that, “As much as Sarajevo belongs to the Turks, in the similar way Istanbul belongs to the Bosnians. That is why we consider it our sacred duty to preserve every stone in Sarajevo, and this was requested to us by President Alija Izetbegović”.⁸³⁷

In the similar way Turkish President Abdullah Gül during the inauguration of Yunus Emre Turkish Culture Center in Tirana emphasized that Turkey and Albania share common culture and Albanian people who were eager to learn Turkish language and culture would make good use of this center. According to Gül, Turkey would promote its history and culture to the world through such culture centers.⁸³⁸

According to Kaya and Tecmen, the locations of the YEI's reflect the common cultural heritage approach within the Neo-Ottoman discourse. As was mentioned from the Turkish leadership, these locations were intentionally chosen aiming to strengthen the common cultural heritage.⁸³⁹

If the question arises in which countries has the most cultural centers of Yunus Emre within the Balkan region it can be seen that Bosnia and Herzegovina has three cultural

⁸³⁶ “Davutoglu Otvorio Turski Kulturni Centar Junus Emre”, **Klix**, 17.10.2009, <https://www.klix.ba/magazin/kultura/davutoglu-otvorio-turski-kulturni-centar-junus-emre/091017046>, [22.03.2020].

⁸³⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸³⁸ “Turkey Opens Yunus Emre Culture Center in Albanian Capital”, **World Bulletin**, 11.12.2009, <https://www.worldbulletin.net/archive/turkey-opens-yunus-emre-culture-center-in-albanian-capital-h51161.html>, [23.03.2020].

⁸³⁹ Ayhan Kaya and Ayşe Tecmen, “The Role of Common Cultural Heritage in External Promotion of Modern Turkey: YunusEmre Cultural Centres”, **European Institute**, Working Paper No.4 (2011):13.

centers (In Fojnica, Sarajevo and Mostar), Kosovo also has three cultural centers (In Pristina, Prizren and Peja), while Albania has two (In Tirana and Shkodra). This means that out of a total of fifteen cultural centers of Yunus Emre in the Balkan region, eight are in these three countries. This is in some way related to the views of Ahmet Davutoğlu, whose source is in the book “Strategic Depth”, in which he stressed that Turkey's primary objective in the Balkans would be to strengthen relations and positions with two nations, Bosnians and Albanians. In this regard, the cultural tool would be a very strong part of Turkey's strategy for achieving its objectives in the framework of foreign policy. In this regard, it should also be mentioned the fact that cultural component of foreign policy wasn't a priority of the previous Turkish political elites, particularly the issue of language. Today, there is no other regional or global power in the Balkans that, “focuses on expanding the cultural diplomacy to the extent that Turkey does.”⁸⁴⁰ The best argument of this is the mushrooming of Yunus Emre cultural centres as the largest number of such kind in the region. In a word, through all this effort, Turkey has ambitions to make the Turkish language as a lingua franca .⁸⁴¹

3.2.4.3. Presidency on Turks Abroad –YTB

The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) was founded on April 6, 2010. The main task of YTB is to “coordinate the activities for Turks living abroad, related (sister) communities and Türkiye Scholarship Program, and develop the services and activities carried out in these fields.”⁸⁴²

The YTB cooperates with different stakeholders that have responsibilities regarding the Turks and related communities abroad. YTB cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the Directorate of Religious Affairs, The Yunus Emre Institute, The Council of Higher Education (YÖK), MAARIF foundation and other organizations and institutions.⁸⁴³

YTB works mainly in 4 areas :

⁸⁴⁰ Demirtaş, “Turkish Foreign Policy Towards the Balkans”,10.

⁸⁴¹ **Ibid.**

⁸⁴² <https://www.ytb.gov.tr/en/corporate/institution>, [24.03.2020].

⁸⁴³ Kemal Yurtnaç, “Turkey’s New Horizon: Turks Abroad and Related Communities”, **Center for Strategic Research**, No. 3 (2012): 4.

1. Turkish citizens abroad: The responsibility of the YTB is to search opportunities for collaboration with Turkish citizens abroad, to create relevant strategies and manage activities relating to people from Turkey and their organizations.
 2. Related communities: Refers to the communities of the regions close to Turkey (like Balkans, Middle East or Caucasia for example) who have historical and cultural connection with the Turks.
 3. International students: Within this area through the program of Türkiye Scholarships, YTB provides scholarships for international students that want to study in one of the universities in Turkey.
 4. Non-governmental organisations: YTB aims to help organizations of Turks that operates out of Turkey in their aim to strengthen the political participation in their countries of residence and to support them in intensifying the relations with Turkey.⁸⁴⁴
- In all the mentioned fields, YTB has carried out certain activities, however we will try to analyze the pillar of “International Students” more exactly the program of Türkiye Scholarship, program where YTB has had the most interaction with the Balkans. A large number of students from this region have benefited from this program.

3.2.4.3.1. Turkey Scholarship

Turkey Scholarships is a competitive scholarship program for international students, which enjoys state support and is offered to the most successful students from different countries / regions of the world. The program “provides financial support but also ensures university placement for students in their intended program of application.”⁸⁴⁵ The features of this scholarship program are that apart from university education, aims to provide to the students social, cultural and extra- curricular activities during their stay in Turkey.⁸⁴⁶

The history of providing scholarship to international students date from 1960s, within the frame of bilateral agreements with other countries. Later, during the 1990s with the

⁸⁴⁴ Yaşar Aydın, “The New Turkish Diaspora Policy, Its Aims, Their Limits and the Challenges for Associations of People of Turkish Origin and Decision-makers in Germany”, **SWP Research Paper**, (2014): 17-18.

⁸⁴⁵ “Türkiye Scholarships”, <https://www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr/en/page/about-us/turkiye-scholarships>, [24.03.2020].

⁸⁴⁶ **Ibid.**

support of the President Turgut Özal, for the first time policies towards international students were systematized. In 1992 was initiated the "Great Student Project". The Turkish Scholarships is the continuation of the "Great Student Project" program, updated and relaunched through scholarships for international students.⁸⁴⁷

The aim of Turkey Scholarship program is to prepare future leaders, at the same time to committ them in consolidating interstate cooperation and mutual inter-community understanding; as well as to form a solidarity network that brings these leaders together under one roof. The application period for Turkish Scholarships is announced on its official website, in 8 languages: Turkish, Arabic, English, French, Russian, Bosnian, Persian and Spanish.⁸⁴⁸

During the first year of Türkiye Scholarships program (2012), about 40 thousand applications have been made by international students, and from year to year the number of international students that applied to this program increasead. In 2019 the number of candidates that applied for this scholarship reached about 150 thousand applications.⁸⁴⁹

At the "12th International Students Meeting Final Program" organized by the Federation of International Student Associations (UDEF) in cooperation with Anadolu Agency, the president of YTB Abdullah Eren stressed that from 150 thousand international students in Turkey, 17 thousand are recipients of YTB scholarships. Eren also said that YTB aims to increase the number of international students over 20 thousand in 2023, on the 100th year of the foundation of Turkey as a republic.⁸⁵⁰ For years students from the Balkan region were getting the most scholarships after the students from Central Asian countries.⁸⁵¹ According to YTB data, regarding the Balkan region from 2012-2019, the total number of students (undergraduate, master and doctoral studies) who have won the scholarship of the Turkey Scholarship program has been 3,895.⁸⁵² According to Jahja

⁸⁴⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸⁴⁸ "Institucionet urëlidhëse të Turqisë – Projektet e Departamentit për Turqit Jashtë Shtetit (Pjesa 2)", **TRT**, 08.03.2020, <https://www.trt.net.tr/shqip/turqia/2019/03/08/institucionet-urelidhese-te-turqise-projektet-e-departamentit-per-turqit-jashte-shtetit-pjesa-2-1159168>, [24.03.2020].

⁸⁴⁹ "Türkiye Scholarships", **Türkiye Burslari**, <https://www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr/en/page/about-us/turkiye-scholarships>, [24.03.2020].

⁸⁵⁰ "17 Thousands of 150,000 International Students in Turkey are Recipients of YTB Scholarships", **YTB**, 05.05.2019, <https://www.ytb.gov.tr/en/news/17-thousands-of-150-000-international-students-in-turkey-are-recipients-of-ytb-scholarships>, [23.03.2020].

⁸⁵¹ Muhasilović, "Turkey's Soft Power and Public Diplomacy", 336.

⁸⁵² Information provided by YTB, exclusively for use in this doctoral thesis, [08.05.2020].

Muhasilović, it is natural for any regional power to focus its efforts on the region it wants to influence.⁸⁵³ In the case of Turkey, it would be logical to focus on providing scholarships to international students coming from the Balkan region.

From the interviews conducted with some graduate students from the Western Balkans who have come with Türkiye Scholarship program in Turkey, we have identified some of the reasons why they decided to come to study in Turkey. According to them, Turkey is a very close country both in terms of geography and culture. The common traditions, kinship relations, trade, food and so on are elements that attract attention when they have decided to apply for the Turkey Scholarship.

The package of Turkey Scholarship program cover to the students accommodation, food, health insurance and monthly scholarships, economically is suitable for students. Apart of this package, students say that biggest benefit is that you have the chance to meet and study with students from all over the world. It is an multicultural environment, especially if you are a student in Istanbul. According to the students, multicultural experience is richer than in EU universities because Turkey Scholarship program is very inclusive. In general, they say that Turkish society has welcomed the international students with kindness and support in many social aspects, whether through financial, educational and other aspects of life. Graduates from the Balkans also assessed deficiencies of Türkiye Scholarship program. They stressed that Turkish Scholarship program has changed often the rules of scholarship and the directives were mostly implemented in a top-down “commands”. The bottom-up perspectives were barely taken into consideration. In this context, Turkish Scholarship program should build an “infrastructural power” trying to understand the requirements of the students and being constantly in communication / negotiation with them. This would provide productivity of students and increase their motivation. For example, the decision not to allow YTB students to participate in the Erasmus exchange program was not sufficiently argued to the students.

They also highlighted why Turkey has launched this type of program since 2012. According to them Turkey Scholarship program is a very good tool of Turkish

⁸⁵³ Muhasilović, “Turkey’s Soft Power and Public Diplomacy”, 342.

diplomacy and part of its soft power. If the program is analyzed, it can be seen that regardless of what language you will study, in the first year you must take Turkish language course. In that way students somehow will stay connected with Turkey even after going back to their countries. Thus, achieving this objective is a long-term process. But, in indirect way through this program Turkish culture and language will be spread around the world. Additionally Turkey has started this project to expand its network in the field of academic relations, as well as in the framework of cultural diplomacy. On the other hand, the funds given to foreign students are financial assets that are returned to the Turkish economy almost 100%. Graduates also say that Turkey Scholarship program goes beyond Neo-Ottoman aspirations, is a “bigger bite” aiming to expand globally and not only within the previous borders of the Ottoman Empire. It has made some progress, but still far away from similar strategies of countries like China or the United States of America.

3.2.4.4. Presidency of Religious Affairs – Diyanet

Another institution / agency that works under state support and has a significant impact both within Turkey and in its foreign policy, especially during the JDP's rule, is the Directorate of Religious Affairs or Diyanet.

Diyanet was established on March 3, 1924, “under article 136 of the Constitution of Turkey by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as a successor to the Shaykh al-Islām after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate.”⁸⁵⁴ As an institution it fulfill the obligations as provided by law, in the line with the principles of secularism, and being away from all political views and concepts, and aspiring at national solidarity, prosperity and integrity.⁸⁵⁵

Among key objectives of Diyanet are providing services without discrimination between religions, understanding and practice on religion and promotion of the experience and knowledge of Turkey in the religious field, correct understanding of Islam as a religion

⁸⁵⁴ “Presidency of Religious Affairs, Establishment and a Brief History”, **Diyanet**, <https://www.diyaret.gov.tr/en-US/Institutional/Detail/1/establishment-and-a-brief-history>, [25.03.2020].

⁸⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

abroad, closely monitoring of discussions on existing religious understanding and practice in Turkey and EU, offering to Western public accurate information about it.⁸⁵⁶

Regarding the presence of Diyanet in the Balkans, it can be said that its first contacts with this region can be found after the end of the Cold War. In the Post - Cold War period, states from the former Yugoslavia had reached independence and recognized the need for religious services for their Muslim community. Therefore, the majority of these states created religious institutions similar as a Diyanet but their human and financial capacities were limited. The main reason why they signed cooperation agreements with Turkey's Diyanet was because they had the need to enhance their organizational capacities and to minimize the influence of some Salafi and Wahhabi groups who appeared in the Balkans. Turkey's profile as a secular state played a key role in this process.⁸⁵⁷ Diyanet's position was further strengthened in the international arena after the JDP came to power.

The strengthening of Diyanet's position in the international context is also evidenced by its representation in "Religious Service Consultancies and Coordination Offices for Religious Services based in Turkish Embassies and the Religious Service Attache Office based in Turkish General Consulates." According to data researched by Yahya Muhasilovic, "as of 2016, 55 Religious Service Consultancies, 39 Attache Offices for religious service and 12 Coordination Offices for Religious Services were active in more than 100 countries".⁸⁵⁸ In the Balkan region, except Slovenia, Diyanet provide Religious Services Consultancies in every state. Attache Offices are active in Romania, Bulgaria and BiH while coordination offices exist in Serbia and Greece.⁸⁵⁹ Apart from this permanent staff, the Diyanet also sends additional religious staff to Turkish villages of Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia and Kosovo during the month of Ramadan organizing evening meals (iftars) in cooperation with the local Islamic institutions.⁸⁶⁰

Since 1995 the department for Euroasian countries within the Diyanet has been organizing Eurasian Islamic Council (EIC), where countries from the Balkans are

⁸⁵⁶ Presidency of Religious Affairs, Temel İlke ve Hedefler, **Diyanet**, <https://www.diyamet.gov.tr/tr-TR/Kurumsal/Detay//3/diyamet-isleri-baskanligi-temel-ilke-ve-hedefleri>, [25.03.2020].

⁸⁵⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸⁵⁸ Muhasilovic , "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy ", 70-71

⁸⁵⁹ **Ibid.**

⁸⁶⁰ Anne Ross Solberg, "Balkan Muslims and Islam in Europe", **Südosteuropa**, Vol. 55, No. 4 (2007): 438.

members too. In this meetings, topics like Islamic practice, organization of the pilgrimage (hajj) and accreditation of university degrees are talked and managed by offering Diyanet's religious services to the Islamic administrations of other states. As a supplementary forum to the EIC, Diyanet in regional context organize every year meeting of the leaders of the Balkan Muslim communities since 2007.⁸⁶¹ Through this format of meeting, Diyanet aims to bring together Muslim leaders from the Balkan states to talk about regional issues, issues regarding the charitable foundations known as Vaqf, Inter-religious dialogue, fighting terrorism, Islamophobia, and other topics.⁸⁶²

Another activity which Diyanet support in the Balkans is the education of preachers and religious scholars. Diyanet offers scholarships for students, organize educational programmes and translates the Quran and other religious books into the languages of the destination countries. As an example, in 2013, around thirty imams from the mosques in Kosovo had a one-month trainings in the city of Bursa, where the focus has been the collaboration among the Islamic Community of Kosovo and Diyanet.⁸⁶³

It should be emphasized that one of the biggest contributions of Diyanet in the Balkans has been its role in the construction and reconstruction of mosques. In projects related to restoration, Diyanet cooperates with Turkish Ministry of Culture and TİKA, which consider mosques of the Ottoman period as a important part of the Turkish heritage as well as the Islamic one.⁸⁶⁴ Regarding the building of new mosques, Diyanet uses another strategy. Since Diyanet has no direct constitutional mandate for construction of mosques, it was initiated the "twin cities project, which brings together the local mufti's office of a town in the Balkans with a mufti office from a town in Turkey."⁸⁶⁵ As of 2015, 215 cities in Turkey took the responsibility for the building of over 100 mosques, Qur'an courses and madrasas in 203 sister cities in 95 states. From a total of 215 sister cities relations around the world, 66 are from the Balkan region, which represents around 1/3 of all matchings. This is an indication that Balkan region dominates

⁸⁶¹ Mehmet Ozkan, "Turkey's Religious Diplomacy", **The Arab World Geographer**, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2014): 232.

⁸⁶² Muhasilovic , "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy", 71.

⁸⁶³ David Rama, "Soft Power in Turkey's Foreign Policy - Case studies of Albania and Kosovo", (Master Thesis, Kapodistrian University of Athens Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, Athens, September 2017), 32.

⁸⁶⁴ Kerem Öktem, "Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans", **Journal of Muslims in Europe**, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (2012): 44.

⁸⁶⁵ **Ibid.**

regarding the cooperations with sister cities from Turkey.⁸⁶⁶ The ‘twin cities‘ projects created network opportunities between congregations in Turkey and the Balkans. In a lot of cases they reached beyond the construction phase of the mosques, referring to reciprocal visits by members of the congregation, preachers and young people.⁸⁶⁷

Concrete examples is the cooperation between mufti’s office of Prizren with that of Antalya. The mufti of Antalya had launched the initiative to collect financial support for the building of a new mosque in Prizren, collecting over 700,000 Euros. After construction, the name of the mosque was decided to be as the mosque of Antalya. Other successful sister cities cooperation between Balkans and Turkey can mentioned the Mufti's office of Ulcinj in Montenegro with that of Alanya, the Berat's one (Albania) with the Yozgat, Maglaj in Bosnia with Kayseri, Mitrovica in Kosovo with the Bajram Pasha district of Istanbul and so on.⁸⁶⁸

Diyanet also has been active in the Balkans in the publications section. For example, in 2016, two thousand copies of Qur'an were published in Bosnian. In Bulgaria, twenty thousand copies of the “Basic Islamic Knowledge Series” edition have been printed, while ten thousand copies of the title “I am learning about my Prophet” have been published in Albanian.⁸⁶⁹

As can be seen, Diyanet has a multi dimensional approach in the Balkans, helping to repair and build mosques, offering courses and trainings with Islamic religious connotation, offering scholarships for theological studies for Balkan students in Turkey, but also supporting various religious publications in different languages of the Balkan region.⁸⁷⁰

But as noted earlier one of the most important duties of the Diyanet is to ensure true and healthy Islamic sources to their Muslim brothers in the region, more exactly fighting Radical Islamic and Orthodox Sects in the Balkans through promotion of the soft Turkish Islam. The evidence of this new policy in the Balkans is the functional and

⁸⁶⁶ Muhasilovic , “Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy”, 72.

⁸⁶⁷ Öktem, “Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks”, 45.

⁸⁶⁸ **Ibid.**

⁸⁶⁹ Muhasilovic , “Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy”, 73.

⁸⁷⁰ Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, “A Frame for Turkey’s Foreign Policy via the Diyanet in the Balkans”, **Journal of Muslims in Europe**, Vol. 7, Issue 3 (2018): 344.

financial activation of Diyanet in the region. The role of Diyanet is a novelty typical of the era of the JDP government.⁸⁷¹

The international community, led by USA, also support the promotion of moderate Islam, such as Turkey's model. And in the context of geopolitical transformations and increased security concerns, especially after the events of September 11, they have further open the path for the spreading of the influence of Turkish Islamic actors in the Balkans. On the one hand, the penetration of financial means and people from the Arab states in the Balkans has been reduced due to stricter controls of Islamic activities by states of the region. On the other hand, as we have pointed out, the Western community sees Turkey's "moderate" Islam in the Balkan region as a counterweight to possible "radical" impacts from Arab states.⁸⁷²

According to Agon Demjaha and Lulzim Peci:

“The Turkish approach in the Balkans has been completely different from the Wahhabi organizations. Organizations and foundations from Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries have an approach that is contrary to local Islamic institutions and traditional practices, imposing an Islam that was not previously known to the Balkans.”⁸⁷³

On the other hand, Turkish organizations, in particular government agencies, have supported existing Islamic communities strengthening their infrastructure through some of the above-mentioned initiatives.⁸⁷⁴

Therefore, recent perceptions of Turkey have been seen not only as "secular Muslim nation" but also as "a moderate Islamic player" who can contribute to the further development of moderate Islam in the region. Taking into account the common historical, religious, kinship and cultural ties, Turkish state and non-state actors in the Balkans have been welcomed by the international community as well as by the local population compared to those from Arab countries. The broad engagement and correct

⁸⁷¹ Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu, “Turkey’s Kin Politics in the Balkans: Legacies, Challenges and Novelties”, **Turkish-Balkans Relations: The Future Prospects of Cultural, Political and Economic Transformations and Relations**, ed. Muhidin Mulacic, Hasan Korkut, Elif Nuroglu (İstanbul: Tasam Publication, 2013): 215.

⁸⁷² Agon Demjaha and Lulzim Peci, “Çfarë Ndodhi me Shqiptarët e Kosovës: Ndikimi i Religjionit në Identitetin Etnik në Periudhën e Shtet-Ndërtimit”, **KIPRED**, No.1/16 (2016): 46.

⁸⁷³ **Ibid.**

⁸⁷⁴ **Ibid.**

relations between Diyanet of Turkey and Islamic Communities of the Balkans have cultivated a closer identification between "Turkish Islam" and "Balkan Islam".⁸⁷⁵

Even according to Hazim Fazlic:

“The local populations in the Balkans and officials of the Islamic Communities have generally welcomed the Turkish state and non-state actors and no major dispute have occurred between them as was the case with the neo-salafi organizations from the Arab world.”⁸⁷⁶

Additionally, Fazlic emphasizes that the positive feelings towards Turkey and the Ottoman Empire are shared more or less in an identical way in the countries like Macedonia, Kosovo, BiH as well as the Sandžak region. Particularly in BiH, Turkey’s presence according to Fazlic, “is often seen as a very natural development after a long period of disengagement of Turkish governments towards the Balkan region.”⁸⁷⁷

From the activity of the Diyanet outside of Turkey, it can be seen that importance of the Diyanet within the state establishment is a kind of *sui generis* compared to other states. It is probably that this is the only case where it is given importance and space to such a kind institution to operate within the framework of state foreign policy. Considering this, it can be said that JDP policies created a space for Diyanet as a state apparatus, but also as a religious diplomacy actor.⁸⁷⁸ In this connotation, according to Semiha Sözeri and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, it can be argued that under JDP rule, Sunni Islam has replaced the secularism (*laiklik*) as one of the key pillars constituents of Turkish foreign policy. Prioritization of the Islamic identity has been interpreted as increasing soft power within Turkish foreign policy.⁸⁷⁹

3.2.4.4.1 The Issue of Islamic Communities in the Region of Sandžak (Serbia) and the Efforts of Diyanet as Mediator

Sandžak is a region located in the south-west of Serbia and the north of Montenegro. There are six municipalities in Serbia (Prije polje, Tutin, Priboj, Novi Pazar, Sjenica, and Nova Varoš) and other six in Montenegro (Pljevlja, Gušinja, Bijelo Polje, Rožaje,

⁸⁷⁵ **Ibid.**

⁸⁷⁶ Hazim Fazlic, “Islam in the Successor States of Former Yugoslavia- Religious Changes in the Post-Communist Balkans from 1989-2009”, (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham Graduate School of Theology and Religion College of Arts and Law Birmingham, 2011), 173.

⁸⁷⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸⁷⁸ Semiha Sözeri and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, “Diyanet as a Turkish Foreign Policy Tool: Evidence from the Netherlands and Bulgaria”, **Politics and Religion** Vol. 11, No. 3 (2018): 634.

⁸⁷⁹ **Ibid.**, 635.

Berane, and Plav). Sandžak is characterized by her rich cultural historical background as well as by the multi ethnic society dominated by Bosniaks. Since the break up of Yugoslavia, ethnic and political splits characterised the politics of the Sandžak region.⁸⁸⁰ Political clashes between the Sulejman Ugljanin and Rasim Ljajić marked the Sandžak region during the 1990's. Ugljanin was president of Party for Democratic Action which represented Bosnians with more conservative and religious background, whereas Ljajić led Sandžak Democratic Party, which has more secular and independent political formation. But these entrenched and long-standing political splits, since 2007 have been compounded by a new division, that of Sandžak's Islamic Community.⁸⁸¹

The issue that led to the division of the Islamic community was the “announcement of the Law on Churches and Religious Communities by the Ministry of Religion of Republic of Serbia in 2007”.⁸⁸² This law predicted that just one authority for every religious community to be permitted in Serbia. This law was the source for the deeper split between already divided Muslims in Sandžak.⁸⁸³ The history of the problem date since the disintegration of Yugoslavia Islamic Community at the beginning of 1990's, where two muftiates at the same time functioned in the territory of Serbia. The Meshihat of Islamic Community in Serbia with the main office in Novi Pazar directed by Mufti of Sandžak, Muamer ef. Zukorlić between the years 1993-2016. Muamer ef. Zukorlić stayed loyal to the Bosnian Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić. While the Mufti of Belgrade Hamdija ef. Jusufspahić didn't ever accepted Bosnia's authority, but stayed loyal to the Serbian authorities. The new Law on Churches and Religious Communities encouraged Jusufspahić to declare himself as the “Grand Mufti of all Muslims in Serbia in February in 2007.”⁸⁸⁴

In March of 2007, a group of imams from Sandžak, took the decision to pledge their loyalty to Hamdija Jusufspahic emphasizing their displeasure with the treatment shown by Mufti Zukorlić. Aiming to strengthening the position of the newly created Islamic Community among the Bosniaks in Sandžak, Jusufspahić appointed Adem ef. Zilkic

⁸⁸⁰ Kenneth Morrison, “Political and Religious Conflict in the Sandžak”, **Defence Academy of the United Kingdom: Balkans Series**, Vol. 8, No.13 (2008): 1.

⁸⁸¹ **Ibid.**

⁸⁸² Muhasilovic , “Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy”, 75.

⁸⁸³ **Ibid.**

⁸⁸⁴ **Ibid.**

which served between the years 2007-2016 as a Grand Mufti of Serbia. After several ineffective efforts by Zukorlić to unify the Islamic Community at the Congress of Unification held on March 2007, but this was not achieved and the situation got out of control where there was a street confrontations between people of both communities.⁸⁸⁵

In a situation where was no opportunity for finding a solution between the separate structures of the Islamic community in Serbia, the Serbian authorities gave space to the Turkish leadership together with Diyanet to mediate towards an acceptable solution for all parties. The first actions towards this initiative date back to 2009 when during the visit of Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to Serbia, initially was achieved a reconciliation of Sandzak's political structures. The leaders of the two largest Bosniak parties in Sandžak, Rasim Ljajic and Sulejman Ugljanin, extended hands to each other in the presence of Davutoğlu and Serbian foreign minister Vuk Jeremić.⁸⁸⁶

In the same period in Sandžak was present Mehmed Görmez, the president of Diyanet. Unexpectedly for many, Görmez arrived in Novi Pazar the night before the arrival of Davutoğlu. There are no details about his visit. But, It was known that he came to mediate in the reconciliation between the leaders of the divided Islamic community. Turkish Foreign Minister also met with both sides, regardless of the fact that it was not foreseen in the protocol. Davutoğlu talked separately with Mufti Zukorlić and Reis Zilkić. But, the reconciliation mission failed. Religious leaders have maintained their views expressed many times in the past.⁸⁸⁷

Turkey did not give up on this process, and Diyanet was delegated to find an acceptable solution. After two years of negotiations, during the winter of 2011 the stakeholders came close in finding an acceptable solution. The draft agreement of Diyanet foresaw a unification of the two Islamic Communities, and both Zilkić and Zukorlić would withdraw from their positions and the city of Novi Pazar was predicted to be the new center of the unified Islamic Community.⁸⁸⁸ During the official visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in Serbia in October 2011, he expressed hope that a new period will begin where will dominate peace and stability of Serbia including for

⁸⁸⁵ **Ibid.**, 76.

⁸⁸⁶ "Političko Pomirenje da, Versko se ne Nazire", **Danas**, 30.07.2009, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/politicko-pomirenje-da-versko-se-ne-nazire/>, [27.03.2020].

⁸⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸⁸⁸ Muhasilovic , "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy", 77.

the of Sandžak and all Muslims in Serbia. According to Davutoğlu the solution of the problem is important both for the peace of Muslims in Sandžak and in Serbia at whole.⁸⁸⁹ But, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Serbia did not accept the Turkish agreement emphasizing that it favored Zukorlić and Meshihat and was ignoring the Islamic Community of Serbia as a historical and legal fact. The initiative then entered into a next stage which lasted until the year 2013, after which the process of talks would be completely stopped.⁸⁹⁰

The third phase of this issue is considered to be the post-2013 where Diyanet tried a new strategy. This time Diyanet decided to favorise a third group, more concretely the imams who divided their ways with both Novi Pazar as well as with Belgrade. Upon taking this decision, Diyanet was charged by Mufti Zukorlić for their attempts to establish 'third Islamic Community' that would be loyal to Turkey, more exactly to Diyanet.⁸⁹¹

After this event, Turkish diplomacy together with Diyanet slowly shifted its support toward Belgrade and recognized the Islamic Community which is based in the capital of Serbia, as the official representative of Muslims within Serbian territory. During his visit in Serbia in 2017, the Turkish president Recep Tayip Erdoğan even recited the Holy Qur'an in a mosque in Belgrade. According to Zukorlić the reason why Diyanet decided to support the Islamic community in Belgrade is because the clash of interests between Turkey and BiH in context of Diyanet and Bosnian Islamic Community, where the two institutions cultivate regional ambitions. But, despite that, Turkey financially supported the reconstruction of an Ottoman-era public bath in Novi Pazar that pertain to the Meshihat of Sandžak, showing that Turkey doesn't have interest in breaking the relations with Novi Pazar.⁸⁹²

According to theologian Muhamed Jusić the effort by Turkish leadership and Diyanet to mediate the unification of two parallel Muslim religious organizations in Serbia proved that the role Turkey has taken on of being regional mediator in the Balkans will not be an easy one. Jusić stressed that the failed initiatives have demonstrated that unresolved

⁸⁸⁹ "Davutoglu: Novi Period za Sandžak i Muslimane u Srbiji", **Blic**, 25.10.2011, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/davutoglu-novi-period-za-sandzak-i-muslimane-u-srbiji/yhllzwm>, [27.03.2020].

⁸⁹⁰ Muhasilovic, "Turkey's Faith-based Diplomacy in the Balkans", 77.

⁸⁹¹ **Ibid.**

⁸⁹² **Ibid.**

issues in the Balkan region are more complex than it appears from outside, because their source is from deep historical disagreements and conflicting aspirations, and to find a solution for them it will need more than good intentions.⁸⁹³

While the director of the Balkan Center for the Middle East, Ivan Ejub Kostić, claims that Turkey does not have the strength to resolve this dispute, because it has tried several times but without success. Kostić says that:

“Turkey has a very limited influence here, primarily because the Islamic Community in Serbia has significant independence whose work you cannot influence much from outside. I think that Turkey's plans can hardly bear fruit, and honestly I do not see any reason why Turkey would interfere in the institutional issue of any religious community in Serbia, specifically in the Islamic Community. I think that we need to be able to solve our problems and Muslims of Serbia have to raise their voice for their problems and give their own answers, or better said to define their future independently.”⁸⁹⁴

Kostić blamed also Serbian authorities saying that the greatest responsibility is primarily borne by the state, which indirectly initiated this division, and then completely withdrew and does not show any signs and interests to resolve the division among Islamic communities in Serbia.⁸⁹⁵

Diyanet, as can be seen in the range of its activities in the Balkan region also has expanded its mediation efforts. Even for the fact that in the case of Sandžak has not achieved the expected results, the legitimacy of Diyanet by the Islamic communities of the Balkan countries is evident. Although analytical circles to some extent criticize its involvement in internal affairs as noted earlier, its supremacy as leader of Islamic religious issues has never been questioned among the Muslims in the Balkans.

3.2.4.5. A General Reflection on the Government-related Organizations of Turkey in Western Balkans

The presence of organizations / agencies supported by the state of Turkey in the Balkans has provided undoubtedly positive support to these countries by implementing

⁸⁹³ Muhamed Jusic, “Turkey as Mediator, or Something More, between Islamic Communities in the Balkans”, **Stratis**, <https://stratis.ba/research-articles/turkey-as-mediator-or-something-more-between-islamic-communities-in-the-balkans.html>, [28.03.2020].

⁸⁹⁴ Amela Bajrović, “Može li Turska Pomiriti Muslimane u Srbiji?”, **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 01.03.2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-turska-muslimani/29797693.html>, [28.03.2020].

⁸⁹⁵ **Ibid.**

significant number of projects in various fields and establishing closer communication with citizens of these countries.

If a certain state intends to have regional influence around her close regions, in addition of cultivating relations with state political structures also requires to have close communication with their citizens. Turkey realized this and began to implement this strategy, especially in the Balkans. The best form of communication of a state with the citizens of another state is precisely through agencies / organizations supported by the state. In this case, Turkey, through TİKA, Diyanet, YTB and Yunus Emre, has tried to develop relations with the citizens of the Balkan region.

In this regard, in Turkey's perspective can be said that has been achieved considerable success in cultivating good relations with the leadership of the Western Balkan countries as well as with their citizens. Turkey through institutions such as TİKA, Diyanet, Yunus Emre and YTB have realized a large number of projects in fields of social, educational, economic, cultural, religious etc. TİKA with its presence in the Balkans has managed to implement over 3500 projects with a budget expenditure of over 300 million euros. The states of this region in every case have expressed satisfaction and gratitude for the contribution of TİKA and willingness for future cooperation with this institution.

While Yunus Emre with her activities in the field of culture has attracted attention of Balkan people. From the annual reports of Yunus Emre, it was seen that from total number of projects at the annual level, on average, around 30% of these projects have been realized in the Balkan countries. The high interest also was shown for the Turkish language course. Annual reports show that from total number of students at the global level, 30% were from the Balkans who attended in the Turkish language courses.

The attractiveness for the Turkish language can be said that come also from television, i.e. in recent years Turkish soap operas have conquer television programs in the Balkans. In addition to the positive cultural impact it is considered that this has reduced the stereotypes of the Balkan people towards Turkey and increased the number of tourists visiting attractive places of Turkey with a special emphasis Istanbul.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹⁶ Nemanja Cabric, Maja Nedelkovska, Donjeta Demoli and Amina Hamzic, "Turks Bewitch the Balkans with their Addictive Soaps", **Balkan Insight**, 01.05.2013, <https://balkaninsight.com/2013/05/01/turks-bewitch-the-balkans-with-their-addictive-soaps/>, [29.03.2020].

YTB with her projects especially the Turkey Scholarship program, in long term perspective is implementing a fruitful project. On the one hand providing scholarships for international students to study in Turkey, gives to the young people space to get know Turkey better, while on the other hand these students in some way will be "ambassadors" of Turkey after completing their studies and return back to their homeland. In a way, these students will be a bridge between Turkey and the country they come from.

Perhaps the lack of YTB is that it has not developed an official policy that after graduation, successful students be offered jobs in Turkish companies and institutions that are present in different countries. This suggestion also came from the graduate students with whom we conducted interviews. From the year 2012 until 2019, 3,895 students from the Balkan region received scholarships from the Turkey Scholarship program. A significant number of these students are graduates, and Turkey must see these students as an important resource in its foreign policy. YTB must devise a strategy on how Turkey should stay in touch with these students, as so far there is no such thing, while students from the Balkans that benefited from Turkey Scholarship are interested to stay in connection with YTB and Turkey.

And finally, Diyanet as a sui generis type of institution as we have defined it, together with TİKA are organizations that are present in the Balkan region since the early 1990s. The Diyanet's contribution to the Balkans, as noted, has a multi-dimensional approach. From the restoration and construction of new mosques, providing scholarship in the field of theology for international students, translation of Islamic religious literature into local languages, continuous communication with the Islamic religious communities of these countries for the organization of Hajj and the effort to mediation in certain situations such as the Sandžak case, are some of the activities that Diyanet carried out.

However, some of the media, academic and political circles have a critical approach and suspicion that behind these activities there are other goals of Turkey, such as infiltrating secret services, promoting political Islam, trying to reflect the Ottoman Empire as a successful story vis a vis the Balkans etc. And in this regard, the main target of these suspicions are mainly TİKA and Diyanet.

In the context of this, an article published on a Macedonian portal with a tendentious title “Turkey Returns to the Balkans! The agency of Secret Services TİKA, became a Trojan Horse in the Balkan countries”, talks about TİKA that on surface looks like an organization that its goals are noble, it works in charity, it helps the poor, implements cultural and humanitarian projects and so on. But, in the article is emphasized that the main goal of TİKA is to penetrate in the so-called "transitional" Balkan states, characterized by political turmoil and economic instability. In this states, Turkey very easy can adopt the so called Neo Ottoman foreign policy.⁸⁹⁷

Kosovo journalist Arbana Xharra accuse TİKA for non-financial transparency. According to her in most cases TİKA keeps the finances secret, officially there are no figures on how much money it invests. Xharra says that from the information that portal "Zeri" has provided from the Central Bank of Kosovo in 2015, investments from TİKA as donations amount to less than 3 million euros for the period between the years 2009 - 2014. While Xharra claims that only in the main mosque of Prizren, "Sinan Pasha", Turkey invested about 1.2 million euros.⁸⁹⁸

Journalist Xharra claims that millions of euros from Turkey have arrived in Kosovo in non-transparent manner, so according to her, not all the money passed through the banking system.⁸⁹⁹

In an interview with the "Zëri" portal, Columbia University professor in the US, David Philips states that Turkey has been systematic exporter of the Islamic agenda in buying assets and influencing politicians. The Gulf states and Turkey have been generous in funding activities and political parties aimed at spreading Islam. According to him, TİKA has played an important role in financing and restoring Ottoman buildings and cultural facilities. TİKA often offers cash grants, sponsors the network of mosques, religious organizations and Qur'anic madrassas. Philips says that TİKA offers educational scholarships for young people to study at religious institutions in the Middle

⁸⁹⁷ “Турција се Враќа на Балканот! Агенцијата на Тајни Служби ТИКА станува Тројански Коњ во Балканските Државички!”, **Lokalno**, 04.01.2016, https://lokalno.mk/turcija-se-vrakja-na-balkanot-agencijata-na-tajnisluzhbitikastanuvatrojanskikonjyobalanskitedrzhavichki/?utm_source=daily.mk&utm_medium=daily.mk, [29.03.2020].

⁸⁹⁸ Arbana Xharra, “T(H)IKA e Sulltanit”, **Zeri**, 19.08.2016, <https://zeri.info/zerat/103951/t-h-ika-e-sulltanit/>, [30.03.2020].

⁸⁹⁹ **Ibid.**

East and Turkey. According to Philips, current Turkish leadership calls for the formation of a new concept based on political Islam, motivated by the concept of Ummah as a universal Islamic community.⁹⁰⁰

Another suspicious approach toward TİKA has come from the Serbian media, claiming that Ankara through the secret services penetrated within TİKA, is trying to create a "Greater Albania". According to daily newspaper "Večernje novosti" there are serious doubts that latest threats to Serbia by redrawing the borders and creating a "Greater Albania", arrive synchronously from Tirana, Pristina and Presevo, but prepared in Ankara and carried out under the Turkish intelligence services.⁹⁰¹

According to the newspaper, this information was obtained by Serbian security services, which according to their operational data, the offensive approach of Turkish intelligence structures goes through Pristina in two key channels. The first channel of communication and influence is through TİKA, which is mainly focused on activities in the Raška area, but also is present in the municipalities in the Presevo Valley. And the second channel is through intensive meetings of the Turkish secret services with the Albanian leaders in Preševo and Bujanovac.⁹⁰² "Večernje novosti" claim that all these operations are taking place through the Turkish intelligence point in Prishtina, so their subversive work remains as far away possible from the eyes of the Serbian security services.⁹⁰³

Ben-Meir and Xharra claims that Erdoğan's major investments in the Balkans is in Ottoman symbolism aiming to influence especially in the mentality of the Kosovar Albanians and to increase pro-Turkish-Islamist sentiments in current and future generations. Thus, concerns about Diyanet's activities are not limited to the construction of mosques, but also in her cultural and social impact based on Islamic ideology.⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰⁰ "Phillips: Evropa po Kontribucion në Radikalizmin e Shqiptarëve", **Zeri**, 24.02.2017, <https://zeri.info/aktuale/132319/philips-evropa-po-kontribucion-ne-radikalizmin-e-shqiptareve/>, [30.03.2020].

⁹⁰¹ "Ideju Velike Albanije Gura Turska Obaveštajna Služba?", **Krstarica**, 26.04.2017, <https://www.krstarica.com/vesti/region/ideju-velike-albanije-gura-turska-obavestajna-sluzba/>, [30.03.2020].

⁹⁰² "Otkriće Srpskih Bezbednjaka, Turske Službe Prave 'Veliku Albaniju'!", **Alo!** 26.04.2017, <https://www.alo.rs/vesti/aktuelno/turske-sluzbe-prave-veliku-albaniju/104745/vest>, [30.03.2020].

⁹⁰³ "Ideju Velike Albanije", [30.03.2020].

⁹⁰⁴ Alon Ben-Meir and Arbana Xharra, "Diyanet: Makineria Islamike e Erdoganit Në Ballkan", **Alonben-Meir**, 18.10.2018, <http://alonben-meir.com/writing/diyanet-makineria-islamike-e-erdoganit-ne-ballkan/?lang=sq>, [01.04.2020].

While the director of the Balkan Center for the Middle East, Ivan Ejub Kostič says that intervention of Diyanet in the internal affairs of Islamic Community in Serbia wasn't accept positively. According to Kostič there is no reason why Turkey would interfere in the institutional issue of any religious community in Serbia, specifically in the Islamic Community. He says that internal issues of Islamic Community of Serbia should be resolved by the Muslims living in Serbia.⁹⁰⁵

These accusations have been rejected by officials of Turkish state, calling them baseless and prone to disrupting of relations between Turkey and the Balkan region. Eyüp Yavuz Ümütlü during his tenure as Coordinator of the TİKA office in Prishtina in a statement for Anadolu Agency in 2016 stressed that, "some aim to tarnish the image of TİKA, Turkey and President of Turkey, making manipulative claims and news that have no real basis". Ümütlü emphasizes that these circles that persistently make these kinds of manipulative news try to present TİKA as a religious institution, but this institution through projects in various sectors aims to improve the life of citizens.⁹⁰⁶

The Turkish embassy in Kosovo also denied the accusations made in the first place to TİKA, emphasizing that TİKA aims to offer its contributions to many countries, especially in the Balkans. TİKA's activities are not limited only education, health and agriculture, but also contribute in the increasing of employment, supporting women entrepreneurs, developing institutional infrastructure and protecting the common human heritage. Undoubtedly, these activities contribute to the further strengthening of the historical ties of friendship between the Kosovar and Turkish people.⁹⁰⁷

Pro and contra positions on each issue are present, including the activities of organizations / agencies from Turkey that operate in the Balkans. Criticisms addressed to these structures, as noted, are focused on the aspect of financial transparency as well as the background of the activities that are described as "secret agendas." The biggest fear that skeptics have regarding the presence of these structures is the eventual

⁹⁰⁵ Bajrović, "Može li Turska Pomiriti".

⁹⁰⁶ Erkin Keçi, "Pretendimet e Pabazuara kanë Synim Prishjen e Imazhit të Turqisë", **Anadolu Agency**, 28.08.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/bota/-pretendimet-e-pabazuara-kan%C3%AB-synim-prishjen-e-imazhit-t%C3%AB-turqis%C3%AB-/632013>, [01.04.2020].

⁹⁰⁷ "Ambasada Turke Reagon ndaj Shkrimit Urrejtës të Katolikes Arbana Xharra", **Shekulli**, 03.03.2017, <http://shekulliagency.com/lajme/ambasada-turke-reagon-ndaj-shkrimit-urrejtes-te-katolikes-arbana-xharra/>, [02.04.2020].

promotion of an Islamic agenda which could lead to later consequences, including an alienation from Western values, which is not in the interest of the Western Balkan states. In terms of transparency, these institutions should have a more open approach, with the incorporation of financial list in details in their annual reports. Also, the tendencies of journalists and other profiles that emphasize financial non-transparency in a concrete case of TİKA, should have a legal reaction by TİKA or other targeted structures of Turkey. If it is considered that defamation is made against these structures, then these persons should be sued for defamation. A lack of action in this regard will leave space for such accusations in the future.

An additional recommendation, for the better functioning of these organizations, is the professional commitment of the students who graduated with a YTB scholarship from the Balkans. These students, on the one hand know better the ground where they live and can give directions and recommendations on what form the actions should be taken. On the other hand, these students, during their studies in Turkey received an education and a working culture of Turkey and would have no difficulty in establishing a bridge of connection with the Turkish representatives which are usually at the head of these organizations and people of the Balkan Peninsula.

3.2.5. Turkey's Request for Revision of History Text Books in Kosovo

National history is among the most important subjects in primary and high school education. In every state, cadres of the history department has a importance and the good part of the public funds are invested in this field. Identification with the glorious past, showing respect to national heroes, the anniversaries of important national days and the celebration of basic events such as the victories of wars, revolutions and independence days are crucial functions of national history writings.⁹⁰⁸

History textbooks are determinant academic material in the construction of national identity. They can contribute toward reconciliation or division among certain nations.

⁹⁰⁸ Ertem Ozge, "Rethinking Historical Perceptions in the Balkans", **South East Europe Review on Labor and Social Affairs**, Vol. 5, No 2 (July 2002): 55.

Also, textbooks can contribute in preventing or resolving conflicts, as it highlighted in UNESCO's 2011 Global Monitoring Report.⁹⁰⁹

In this regard, In 2010 Prime minister of Turkey Recep Tayip Erdoğan visited Kosovo and during the meeting with his counterpart Hashim Thaçi raised the concerns regarding some parts of the history textbooks where the Ottoman Empire is described in negative context. As chronicles says, Erdoğan quested to review all parts of textbooks where Ottoman Empire is portrayed negatively. One year later, in 2011, the Turkish minister of Education Ömer Dinçer, followed by minister for Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Kosovo, to discuss the same issue.⁹¹⁰

Turkish Minister for Education Ömer Dinçer during a meeting with the Kosovo's Minister of Education Ramë Buja has asked to be removed some paragraphs from history books of Kosovo, which contain insult to Turkey and historical personalities of the country. Minister Buja and his counterpart Dinçer from Turkey, during a press conference stated that these two countries, except in political terms, should promote cooperation in other fields, especially in education. More specifically, there was a requirement by the Turkish Minister Ömer Dinçer, to be taken into consideration several passages in the history books of Kosovo which offend Turkey.⁹¹¹

Turkish diplomatic offensive in the direction of Kosovo in this period did not stopped. One week after the visit of the Minister of Education Ömer Dinçer, the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu arrived in Kosovo for an official visit. In a press conference with his counterpart Enver Hoxhaj, Davutoglu stressed that Kosovars should not learn the history which has to do with Turkey according to textbooks from the time of Tito or Enver Hoxha.⁹¹² Davutoğlu has emphasized that:

“History does not change and will not change. What can be changed is its interpretation. We want this to be done by a group of intellectuals in order to clear up prejudices as we do not want future

⁹⁰⁹ Emanuela C. Del Re, “Language, education and conflicts in the Balkans: policies, resolutions, prospects”, **Italian Journal of Sociology of Education**, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2013): 206.

⁹¹⁰ “Turqia Kërkon Ndryshimin e Librave të Historisë në Kosovë”, **Albinfo**, 19.08.2011, <https://www.albinfo.ch/turqia-kerkon-ndryshimin-e-librave-te-historise-ne-kosove/>, [02.04.2020].

⁹¹¹ **Ibid.**

⁹¹² “Davutoglu në Kosovë: Historinë jo Sipas Titos e Hoxhës”, **Bota Sot**, 27.08.2011, <https://www.botasot.info/aktuale/133975/davutoglu-ne-kosove-historine-jo-sipas-titos-e-hoxhes/4>, [02.04.2020].

generations to receive wrong lessons. The history of Kosovo should be written by Kosovars, but by Kosovars living in 2011, not in the 1970s or 1980s, not history that was written in the period of Enver Hoxha or Tito. I want to make it clear that we are not against the real story, but against the ideological one “.⁹¹³

While the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo Enver Hoxhaj stated that although the request comes from the Turkish government, this is an issue that needed to be addressed by academics. According to him the history should be written by academics, people of educational institutions and not politicians, and not governments. In this regard, it is not up to many politicians to debate the content of historical texts.⁹¹⁴

In fact, before the arrival of the Minister of Education Ömer Dinçer and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu in Kosovo, the Minister of Education of Kosovo, Ramë Buja, in April 5, 2011 has established a “Commission for reviewing the portrayal of Ottoman and Turkish history, geography and culture in textbooks of the Republic of Kosova”, which came up with some proposals about changes in history textbooks. On the head of this committee was Prof. Shkelzen Raça (historian), with members Prof. Rushdie Plana (geographer), Prof. Hysen Toshi (Ottoman and Turkish culture-language literature), MSc Astrit Mustafa (Ottoman and Turkish culture-music) and secretary of the commission, MSc Avni Rexha.⁹¹⁵

This commission delivered recommendations to the Ministry of Education of Kosovo for the parts which should be corrected in the history textbooks. But before delivering the recommendations the committee members went in Ankara, at the institute which deals with the preparation of textbooks and curricula. After visiting Ankara the commission held eight meetings, confirmed the secretary Avni Rexha. Each member of the commission has given ideas and proposals individually and the president of the

⁹¹³ “Davutoglu: Historinë jo Sipas Titos e Hoxhës”, **Top Channel**, 26.08.2011, <https://top-channel.tv/2011/08/26/davutoglu-historine-jo-sipas-titos-e-hoxhes/>, [02.04.2020].

⁹¹⁴ “Davutoglu: Historia, jo sipas Titos dhe Hoxhës”, **Lajme**, 27.08.2011, <https://www.lajme.gen.al/2011-08-27/davutoglu-historia-jo-sipas-titos-dhe-hoxhes.html>, [02.04.2020].

⁹¹⁵ Jeton Musliu, “Ndryshimi i Historisë Zbut Perandorinë Osmane”, **Kallxo**, 17.12.2012, <https://kallxo.com/gjate/ndryshimi-i-historise-zbut-perandorine-osmane/>, [03.04.2020].

commission with the Secretary submitted a report of recommendations to the Ministry of Education.⁹¹⁶

The head of the commission Shkelzen Raça says that the commission has done a good job, neutral and professional, in accordance with the methodology and adaptation of textbooks for primary and secondary schools. "We think we have been very constructive and prudent. The aim was to remove hate speech from the textbooks, and the aggressive vocabulary more or less ", he said.⁹¹⁷

The recommendations of the commission were accepted by the Kosovo's Ministry of Education. Ramush Lekaj, the head of division for the plan - programs within the Ministry of Education emphasized that recommendations will be included in the school year of 2013-2014. Additionally he stressed that it is unknown the cost of the republishing of the books nor how many books will be printed next year.⁹¹⁸

In this process, there were reactions from the authors of the textbooks because none of them was included in the commission or consulted for the corrections that will be done in the republication of the books. Historians Frasher Demaj and Fehmi Rexhepi, said that no one has consulted them to make corrections in the textbooks of history. In a joint statement for the newspaper "Jeta në Kosovë", they say that it is an institutional obligation, despite various preferences, since the beginning of this work, that part of this commission be one of the authors of history textbooks. But contrary to them, Professor Shkelzen Raça, chairman of the commission, emphasized that the commission was not obliged to consult the authors of the texts.⁹¹⁹

The main details where the suggestions for changes in the history books for primary and secondary schools are proposed are published exclusively in the paper "Report on the

⁹¹⁶ Elida Zylbeari, "Perandoria Osmane nuk ishte pushtues i dhunshëm, nuk hakmirrej!?", **Portalb**, 17.12.2012, <https://portalb.mk/66944-perandoria-osmane-nuk-ishte-pushtues-i-dhunshem-nuk-hakmirrej/>, [03.04.2020].

⁹¹⁷ "Ndryshimi i Historisë na Afron me Perandorinë Osmane", **Kosova Haber**, 17.12.2012, <https://www.kosovahaber.net/?page=1,38,16282>, [03.04.2020].

⁹¹⁸ **Ibid.**

⁹¹⁹ "Ndryshimi i Historisë: Në kohën e Perandorisë Osmane – S'kishte Dhunë, S'kishte Hakmarrje, S'kishte Vrasje...!", **Telegrafi**, 16.12.2012, <https://telegrafi.com/ndryshimi-i-historise-ne-kohen-e-perandorise-osmane-skishte-dhune-skishte-hakmarrje-skishte-vrasje/>, [03.04.2012].

Debate of the Portrayal of the Ottoman Empire in Kosovo-Kosovo History Textbooks".

The recommendations made, are as follows:

History Textbook, Grade 5:

"It is recommended that words revenge and murder be removed from page 45 and replaced with take over the properties, impose taxes, and deport part of the local population, whereas the sentence Ottomans killed many Albanians be removed altogether. Remove the phrase Ottoman attacks from page 42 and replace it with Ottoman military advancement."⁹²⁰

History textbook, Grade 6:

"On page 69 the word crudeness is recommended to be replaced with from military intervention. On page 77 the claim stating "...Ulqin and the threats that the league forces withdraw from this city were joined by other neighbours" be replaced to read "...threats to remove the Prizren League forces from Ulqin were accompanied by a fleet of the Great Powers on the city coast comprising 17 ships". On the same page, the sentence reading "inability to publish books in Albanian language under the Ottoman rule" be extended to include that "the publication of books in Albanian was also hindered by the Istanbul (Greek) Patriarchate". On page 86, the sentence reading "after they violently occupied the League of Peja", should be changed to read "after they crushed the League of Peja".⁹²¹

History textbook, Grade 8:

"On page 68 the sentence saying "harsh measures awaited those not belonging to the religion of Islam", be replaced with "In practice all citizens residing in areas occupied by the Ottoman Empire were equal before law in their daily life. However there were occasional abuses by local Ottoman employees during the Tansimat Reform". On page 103, the sentence reading "the purpose of the Istanbul Association was to pull the Albanian people out of backwardness" be changed to read "The purpose of the Istanbul Association was first and foremost the fulfilment of the cultural and educational needs of the Albanian people". On p. 105-6 the sentence reading "this development was not welcomed by Ottoman government", and the one reading "Albanian teachers and parents were being pursued by the Ottoman government" be replaced by "This development was not welcomed by the Ottoman government and there were cases when the local government of the Sublime Porte forbade teachers from instructing students in the Albanian language, while discouraging parents from enrolling their children for education in their mother tongue". Also, the sentence reading "The Ottoman Empire was attempting to impose Turkish/Arabic culture on the Albanian people, but without any great success" be replaced with "The Ottoman Empire endeavoured to equip Albanians with knowledge of the Ottoman/Arabic culture". On p. 113 it is suggested that the phrase Turkish rule be replaced by Ottoman rule; the word terror be replaced with "measures of punishment were undertaken against fighters and their families". On p. 124 the request to remove the word Turkish and replace it with Ottoman is repeated. On p. 141, "were spiteful against the Ottoman rule" be replaced with "requested to strengthen the combat against the regime of the Young Turks". On p. 142 the sentence stating "The Young Turks tricked part of the Albanian people" be replaced with "the Young Turks, after assuming power, did not stick to their promises to Albanians regarding the accomplishment of their political and national rights". On p. 156 replace the paragraph of text with the sentence: "At the beginning of the 20th century Kosova was one of the most populous and least economically

⁹²⁰ Shkelzen Gashi, "Report on the Debate of the Portrayal of the Ottoman Empire in Kosova- Kosovo History Textbooks", **Eckert Working Papers**, No.1 (2015):3.

⁹²¹ **Ibid.**

advanced areas in the Balkans. This was a consequence of certain social, economic and political circumstances of the past.”⁹²²

History textbook, Grade 10:

“On p. 137 the period 1517-1519 be replaced with 1514-1519 and the phrase “Ottomans launched a campaign of conquest in Asia as well” be replaced with “Ottomans expanded territorially in Asia as well”. The phrase “the occupied countries were subjected to great Ottoman exploitation” be replaced with “were subjected to new economic circumstances”. On p. 138 the statement that “first signs of a weakened Ottoman Empire were the rivalries for the throne witnessed in the Sultan’s court” be replaced with “the first signs of this crisis and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire were the rivalries for power, the dissatisfaction of the Yenichers with their position and the initial weakening of the Ottoman feudal military”. On p. 140 the sentence “Had great consequences” be replaced with “had deep social, political and economic impact”. The phrase “Ottomans pursued a discriminatory policy” be replaced with “Ottomans pursued a policy of subduing local populations”. The phrase “Ottoman rule was unorganized and outdated” be replaced with “Ottoman rule started to weaken, while the Ottoman administration was lagging behind in comparison to the more developed countries of Europe”.”⁹²³

History textbook, Grade 12:

“On p. 48 the phrase “stirred hatred against the Ottoman rule ”should be replaced with “caused dissatisfaction with the Ottoman rule”. On p. 49 the claim that “the rebellious forces were fiercely extinguished”, should be replaced by “rebellious forces were extinguished by military intervention of Ottoman forces”. On p. 65 the words exercised terror be replaced with undertook harsh political measures. On p. 66 remove the word violent to read only Ottoman rule. On p. 69 remove the word slavery and replace with Ottoman rule. On p. 72-73 the claim that “endeavours of Albanian patriots to create a cultural society were hindered by the Sublime Porte ”be followed by “and in particular the Istanbul Patriarchate”. On p. 75 instead of “were not allowed” write “were hindered by Ottoman rule”. On p. 140 where it reads “against Ottoman rulers”, write “against the Ottoman Empire or against the absolutism of Sultan Abdül Hamit II”. On this page, replace the word Turkish with Ottoman. On p. 142 the words fierce actions be replaced by far-reaching actions. On p. 144 the word Turkish be replaced with Ottoman. On p. 145 the word occupiers be replaced with against the Sublime Porte. On p. 165 delete the word ruthless to read only the regime”.”⁹²⁴

3.2.5.1. Reactions of the Albanian Kosovars in Turkey’s efforts in Changing History Textbooks

Request to review the books of history in Kosovo by Turkey sparked reactions and debates. Especially this happened as a result of political interference in academic issues from the officials of Turkey. Undertaken numerous initiatives of Turkey over the last decade in the region of the Western Balkans at first sight seem to be sincere and well-intentioned, but attempts for interference in the internal affairs covered in the form of "suggestions" like this one in Kosovo, opens dilemmas over the sincerity of the

⁹²²Ibid, 4.

⁹²³Ibid.

⁹²⁴Ibid, 5.

"brotherhood" that Turkey proclaims with the countries of the Balkan region. However the main question to be raised here is how intellectuals and academics perceived this request by Turkey in reviewing the history textbooks of Kosovo.

According to the historian Enver Rexha, if somewhere in the history textbooks will be removed term murder when it is known that there was killing, it is wrong thing. Rexha stressed that it exists 500 years of relations between Ottoman Empire and Balkan Region which is impossible to be turn back in the past and change the history because tomorrow maybe Greece, Bulgaria and Macedonia which was founded in the twentieth century but also Serbia that Kosovo have current problems, will ask to change history and to not exist anymore the word murder when actually happened in the past. Rexha concludes that in this case we are not speaking about hateful terminology but is conclusive terminology. If an historian conclude that it has a murder and looting this mean that he referes to scientific sources, but if it's not, and the attempts are done to invent something, this is something else. Then every one should take responsibility about that.⁹²⁵

Another historian, Jusuf Buxhovi, regarding the use of terms in the textbooks, notes that the author is responsible how would involve historical facts and historical realities. Changing the history, which is requested by Turkey, Buxhovi considers that it is a political problem of Kosovo who has not been consistent and in this case normally that Turkey tries to affect segments of certain claims in this particular case with the requirements to change over textbooks.⁹²⁶

Also according to Behxhet Shala, the comfort and the freedom which the Turkish minister of education announced the request for rewriting history It's surprising. This requirement is very undiplomatic by Turkish diplomat. In diplomatic practice this behavior is not acceptable even if we were still under Turkish rule, says Shala. "Turkish

⁹²⁵ "Pernadoria Osmane ne Librat e Historise", Televizioni 21, **Emisioni Randevu**, 19.11.2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBMx_yVXUvw [04.04.2020].

⁹²⁶ **Ibid.**

leadership has come with this request at a time when Serbia is making great efforts to destroy Kosovo”, concludes Shala.⁹²⁷

The review of the history textbooks has raised many reactions also among Albanian intellectuals. A group of Albanian intellectuals among whom was also the great writer Ismail Kadare have prepared a petition⁹²⁸ against the revision of history under the supervision of the Turkish state.⁹²⁹

⁹²⁷ Behxhet Shala, “Rishikimi i Historise apo Perpjkje per Rikthim te Roberise!”, **Telegrafi**, 25.08.2011, <http://www.telegrafi.com/lajme/rishikimi-i-historise-apo-perpjkje-per-rikthim-te-roberise-26-4164.html> [04.04.2020].

⁹²⁸ The petition content, in summary, claims the following: “Recently in Kosovo, it opened the debate about “changing history” and the need for a genuine national history, in which the events and personalities will be treated in correlation with historical facts and the necessary multidisciplinary arguments. Historical facts and scientific arguments are vital events and moments in the history of a nation. They cannot be changed by external interference, especially when it comes to the relationship between an invading empire and an occupied nation, after a resistance that has been a shining page not only in the history of Albanians, but also in the history of Europe. The Ottoman occupation caused a black hole in the history of the Albanian nation interrupting the normal historical process of development of our nation. This invasion forcibly separated the Albanians from Europe and caused indelible tragedy and drama in the historical memory of the nation. We can never agree and condemn the efforts of some pseudo-historians and certain political segments, who try to present the long centuries of Ottoman occupation as a time of peaceful and successful coexistence”. According to the signatories of the petition, Turkey's demands for a change of history in Kosovo is a dark political project, which risks creating dangerous precedents in peace between the peoples of the region. “The attempt to fabricate a non-existent story, with pseudo-historians and state pseudo-commissions, guided by a dark political project, serves neither peace nor true friendship between peoples nor the project of a future that brings peace, harmony and understanding. Justice-based peace is an experience that has helped many peoples understand the past, without denying it, without hiding or distorting historical truths. The history of Europe is full of such examples, and our history must be written on these premises. Albanian intellectuals have also expressed their position on the changes required to be made in reviewing the history of the Ottoman period. “The five-century Turkish occupation has been violent and during that long period there have been killings, exterminations, constant violence, while the Albanians were the most persecuted people of the empire. Let us not forget the fact that from all languages present within Ottoman Empire, the Albanian language was banned in a special and forceful way. This fact alone is enough to show the genocide of the Ottoman Empire against the Albanians, against their culture and identity. It is enough to remember the countless efforts and sacrifices of the Albanian renaissance for the first Albanian secular school, which was opened only on March 7, 1887 in Korça “. In the end, intellectuals point out that “Changes in history, aimed at rehabilitating the Ottoman occupation, constitute a dangerous game that opens a deep wound in our national consciousness. Changes in history with Turkish experts constitute a cultural aggression and an unacceptable insult to Albanians and with consequences for our future and identity. We all already know that any interference in history according to predetermined political scenarios violates the DNA of the Albanian nation “. This petition, signed by Albanian intellectuals, calls on the government of Kosovo, the Assembly of Kosovo, cultural and academic responsible institutions, as well as historians, not to betray their professional and national conscience, to review this arbitrary and completely anti-national decision, to cancel the work of the joint interstate commission to review the history and allow historians to do their independent scientific work, according to the principles and methodology of historical science and not according to the interests, orders and political wills of the current Turkish government. The petition was signed by prominent personalities in various fields, such as writers Ismail Kadare, Visar Zhiti, Beqë Cufaj, poet Bardhyl Londo, philosopher Ardian Ndreca, researcher Shaban Sinani, albanologists, Lucia Nadin,

Beside a one part of academics and intellectuals which was critical to the decision that history textbooks should be revised as a result of the "petition" from the political leadership of Turkey, the another part of scholars disagree with such a conclusion.

According to the historian Ferit Duka, there were harsh problems when it came to interpreting the Ottoman period as a period which was only a dark period, a period without the element of development, a period which gave nothing except darkness and underdevelopment. These concepts must be corrected and repaired without changing the historical facts and must stay away from propagandistic rhetoric and writing objectively the historical facts. Duka stressed that Albania and the regions populated with Albanians has encountered a higher growth during the first period of Ottoman rule. While the economy has increased positively also was established external and internal stabilization respecting the rules. Additionally it should not be exceeded the integration of Albanians in Ottoman administration which they took high position during all period of Ottoman Empire.⁹³⁰

The publicist Halil Matoshi argues that Turkish diplomacy has not sought to change the history of Albanians, as has been interpreted by some semi-illiterates in the field. Turks have sought to change some of the content that protects the language of hatred against them and the ideological interpretation of historical facts. Matoshi says that the petition of the so-called intellectuals has been launched not by reason, but rather the unreasonable and is blatantly based on the collective paranoia and hysteria of nationalism. There was not one illuminated mind among the signatories of the petition from academia and the arts in Albania and Kosova to say stop this hysteria and return to the subject at hand: history!⁹³¹

Franco Altimari, Matteo Mandalà and Monica Genesin, Shpend Bengu, Max Velo, historians Qazim Namani, Romeo Gurakuqi, Gjon Berisha, Jahja Drançolli and many others. "Peticioni i Intelektualëve Ndërhyrjet turke në Histori, projekt i errët politik", **Gazeta Mapo**, 28.03.2013, <https://gazetamapo.al/peticioni-i-intelektualeve-nderhyrjet-turke-ne-histori-projekt-i-erret-politik/>, [04.04.2020].

⁹²⁹ Eliona Lata, "Rishikimi i "Historisë" nën Mbikëqyrjen e Autoriteteve Turke, Intelektualët Peticion, Kundra", **Shekulli**, 27.03.2013, <http://www.shekulli.com.al/p.php?id=19628> [04.04.2020].

⁹³⁰ "Librat e Historisë Duhet 'Pastruar' nga Fyerjet dhe Pasazhet Anti Turke", 10.09.2015, **7NEWS-kanali informative shqiptar**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9BDdSuEm3U> [04.04.2020].

⁹³¹ Halil Matoshi, "Hysteria: Mirë se Erdhët në Orën e Biologjisë!", **Rajoni Press**, 05.04.2013, <https://rajonipress.com/hysteria-mire-se-erdhet-ne-oren-e-biologjise/>, [04.04.2020].

Meanwhile, the university professor Fatih Fuat Tuncer emphasize that the approach presented in the history textbooks in Kosovo “affects the behavior of the society negatively and causes to look at the other societies through a negative point of view.” Tuncer further states that, “In the countries that host many different ethnic elements and still have the same ethnic debates like Kosovo, history writing should certainly be reviewed.”⁹³²

Also the historian Noel Malcolm says that the decision to review the books of history in the part where it has to do with the Ottoman Empire is reasonable. According to him it must be replaced the parts where is stressed the dose of hatred terminology, but this should not be done by high officials of the countries but this responsibility belongs to the academics.⁹³³

Turkish historian Mehmet Hacısalıhoğlu comment the issue of the describing the Ottoman Empire in negative context in the history textbooks. Hacısalıhoğlu emphasize that Albanians were the main leaders of the Ottoman administration. He rejects the term “invasion” because the Albanians lead countries under the Ottoman Empire. According to him the Albanians were the rare population which took high positions in the Empire. If this was the invasion which is described by the current history textbooks then it must be said that Albanians have conquered Egypt, Trabzon or Bulgaria and many other countries, because they lead the administration of Empire. That's why Hacısalıhoğlu does not see the use of the term “invasion” as correct.⁹³⁴ After the independence, Kosovo changed the textbooks describing the Ottoman Empire in negative connotation. He qualifies this approach as incorrect since Turkey was among the first countries that recognize the independence of Kosovo. Regarding the issue of Islamization by force to the Albanians, Hacısalıhoğlu claims that Albanians decided to accept Islam because it was easier to maintain high positions and lands into Ottoman Empire if they accept

⁹³² Fatih Fuat Tuncer, “Discussion About the Ottoman Image in Kosovo's History Writing: Kosovo War and Skanderbeg”, **Akademik Hassasiyetler**, Vol. 6, No. 11 (2019): 142.

⁹³³ “Noel Malcolm: ‘Osmanlı ile İlgili Tarih Kitaplarını Değiştirin’”, **Yeni Balkan**, 05.02.2016, <http://www.yenibalkan.com/kultur/noel-malcolm-osmanli-ile-ilgili-tarih-kitaplarini-degistirin-h5630.html> [04.04.2020].

⁹³⁴ “Historiani Turk: Osmanet jo Pushutes”, **Vizion Plus-News-Lajme**, 10.06.2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyBq4lX8dvc>, [04.04.2020].

Islam.⁹³⁵ According to Hacısalıhoğlu, this approach shows that Albanians as well as other Balkan communities such as Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs and Romanians have a serious problem of perception regarding the Ottoman Empire. Among the main sources of this perception are considered to be history textbooks, specifically the terminology used in these books on the Ottoman Empire.⁹³⁶

Political scientist Shkelzen Gashi is in the same line with Hacısalıhoğlu's stance, claiming that there are several reasons why the Albanians decided to convert from Christianity to the religion of Islam. Among the most important was the financial issue, because after the conversion were eased the taxes; career possibilities in the administration of the Ottoman Empire and societal status, more exactly the prestige. This is why the process of Islamization was more rapid in cities with Albanian population.⁹³⁷

The initiative for reviewing and improving the history textbooks in Kosovo, in long-term would be useful. This kind of initiative in the past was taken by the centuries-old enemies like France and Germany. To not feed future generations with hatred feelings, softening the terminology and deleting the terms which openly express hate for another nation without changing context of the events from the past would be the most reasonable and academic well made decision.

The other point that can be discussed by this initiative is the successful diplomacy of Turkey, which imposed an initiative to review the history books in the parts where the Ottoman Empire is negatively portrayed. This comfort for this type of request is a result of the excellent relationship between the two countries. In other circumstances, it is impossible successfully to implement an initiative of this nature initiated by political circles, which in fact this job belongs exclusively to academics. Hypothetically, if Turkey, through political leadership, made such a request to Iran or France, would it have been considered by these states? Or on the other hand if Serbia or Russia requires

⁹³⁵ **Ibid.**

⁹³⁶ Mehmet Hacısalıhoğlu, "Geçmişle Bitmeyen Kavga: Balkanlarda Tarih ve Tarih Yazımı", **Doğu-Batı**, Vol. 22, No. 89 (2019): 55.

⁹³⁷ Shkelzen Gashi, **The History of Kosovo in the history textbooks of Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia**, (Prishtina: Alter Habitus, 2016), 58.

to Kosovo to review the history textbooks, would the Kosovar leadership have done this. As it was emphasized, this is a result of the excellent relations between these two countries, but also the dependence of Kosovo to have a strong regional ally in the size of Turkey, which would need both, in the internal recovery of the state and in the international connotation where Kosovo fights for the recognition of its independence and inclusion in international organizations.

3.2.6. Debates Over the Involving of Turkey in Establishment of the Political Subject “Besa Movement” in Macedonia

After the 2001 insurgency in Macedonia between the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) and Macedonian security forces which ended with the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), signed on 13 August of that same year, the position of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia was improved in many aspects.

As a result of OFA, the position of Albanians in political representation and decision-making processes had significantly increased in the country. The representation of Albanians in public administration was increased and the State University of Tetova that provides the study programs in the Albanian language was legalized. While in 2001 University of Southeast Europe was established as a private-public nonprofit higher education institution upon the initiative of former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoep. SEE University provide study programs in two languages, Albanian and Macedonian.

Despite the improvement of the legal and political position of the Albanians in Macedonia, their social and economic life did not change progressively. After 2001, the two dominant parties in the Albanian political bloc, the Democratic Party of Albanians⁹³⁸ as the opposition party and the Democratic Union for Integration⁹³⁹ which

⁹³⁸ Democratic Party of Albanians (In Albanian: Partia Demokratike Shqiptare) is a one of the political parties of Albanian community in North Macedonia which was established in 1997. From 1998 to 2001, and from 2006 to 2008 ruled together with VMRO-DPMNE. During 2006-2008, although the DPA did not win the elections in the Albanian political bloc, the Macedonian party VMRO-DPMNE chose the this party as a partner in the ruling coalition. Current president of DPA is Menduh Thaci. For more see: <https://gurra-pdsh.org/>, [07.04.2020]/

⁹³⁹ Democratic Union for Integration is the largest political party of Albanians in Macedonia and currently the third largest political party in the country, after Social Democratic Union of Macedonia and VMRO

since 2001 has been mostly as a ruling party, did not manage to meet the demands of the Albanian electorate for a better life in a economic and social context. All this was accompanied by frequent political and economic crisis with corruption in the background that led to a dissatisfaction of the society.

Taking into consideration the political circumstances, or better said-- the dissatisfaction of the Albanian electorate with the Albanian political parties, on November 22, 2014 was launched the initiative to establish the Besa Movement as a third option in the political Albanian bloc in Macedonia.

Coordinator of the Founding Council of Besa Movement and later president of this Movement, Bilall Kasami, during the inauguration of this political movement stressed that as a result of numerous problems in education, lack of schools and quality education, lack of basic living conditions such as problems with air pollution, drinking water, waste management, and many other basic things which are not being addressed by current political entities, was imposed the idea to establish a new political structure. According to Kasami, Besa as a new political structure tends to emphasize that without developed Albanians, there will not be developed state and currently Besa is the only subject that can change this situation.⁹⁴⁰

While Afrim Gashi as one of the leaders of this political subject emphasizes that Besa Movement in the political scene comes to bring a new system of values, a new political action and a different way of functioning. In fact, according to him, Besa Movement aims to bring moral to politics, to promote and affirm knowledge and professionalism. Gashi also stressed that Besa will vigorously fight all forms of discrimination and

DPMNE. It was created after the conflict of 2001 between the National Liberation Army (NLA) and the Macedonian security forces. Ali Ahmeti the former leader of NLA is the president of DUI. From 2001 to 2020 DUI has been the winner of all elections, both parliamentary and local in the Albanian political bloc. For more see: <http://bdi.mk/>, [07.04.2020].

⁹⁴⁰ Elida Zylbeari, “Në Shkup u Themelua Lëvizja e re Shqiptare në Maqedoni ‘BESA’ “, **Portalb**, 22.11.2014, <https://portalb.mk/124143-ne-shkup-u-themelua-levizja-e-re-shqiptare-ne-maqedoni-besa-video/>, [08.04.2020].

inequality, affirming freedom, justice, equality and well-being as basic principles of functioning.⁹⁴¹

The main objective of this movement was redefinition of the state in which they turned it into a basic platform with which Besa will appear before their electorate. Redefinition of the state according to the Besa Movement meant a new agreement between Macedonians and Albanians, which would establish the principle of general consensus at all levels of state-building. This new agreement between Macedonians and Albanians must be preceded by an interethnic historical reconciliation, where the autochthony of the Albanians and their historical contribution to the formation of this state will be accepted.⁹⁴²

Regarding the ideological profiling of the party, Gashi emphasizes that the Besa Movement will not be positioned either left or right, because this movement is closer to political theory which talks about the end of ideologies and based on this thesis is unrealizable and impossible to have 'pure' ideological profiling of the right, center or left. According to him, in relation to tradition, cultural heritage, nation and family, Besa is close to right-wing, and in terms of social policy, to the left.⁹⁴³

The Besa Movement mainly targets figures and personalities who have not previously been involved in politics, but do not exclude those who were previously part of other political structures, with accepting the vision and values of this Movement. The hierarchy of this Movement comment that most of the members of Besa have not taken active part in other political parties. But the lack of the political experience, they pretend to cover with people who in the past have been active in politics and now are with Besa. While the priority of this movement lies in the challenge and the ambition in the young people that have to contribute to the good wellness of society through this new political subject.⁹⁴⁴

⁹⁴¹ Fatos Musliu, " 'Besa' në Maqedoni - Opcioni i Tretë në Skenën Partiake", **Deutsche Welle**, 21.11.2014, <https://www.dw.com/sq/besa-n%C3%AB-maqedoni-opcioni-i-tret%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-sken%C3%ABn-partiake/a-18079531-0>, [08.04.2020].

⁹⁴² **Ibid.**

⁹⁴³ **Ibid.**

⁹⁴⁴ **Ibid.**

The political commentator Ismet Ramadani says that Besa can succeed, but only if it is addressed to people that are disappointed with the current Albanian political parties. he stressed that if the comparison is made with previous initiatives that did not succeed, this one seems to be more serious. According to him, if Besa Movement achieve to mobilize Albanian young people, intellectuals, the students and undecided voters, convincing them that this movement will follow the path that has defined at the beginning, then it has a chance to triumph in the next parliamentary elections.⁹⁴⁵

However, the emergence of the Besa Movement as the third force in the ethnic Albanian politics in Macedonia, opened debates on Turkey's involvement, more precisely of the JDP leadership involvement in the establishment of Besa as a sister party in Macedonia.

A few months before the establishment of the Besa Movement, an article entitled “Strategy for the opening of Erdogan's party in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia” gave details on the establishment of sister political structures similar to the JDP.⁹⁴⁶

Bearing in mind that the strategy of President Erdoğan guided by the ideas of Ahmet Davutoğlu is to increase the presence in the Balkans and specifically among Albanians by considering historical, cultural and religious relations. Cultural activities, restoration of historical artifacts left from the Ottoman Empire, positioning itself as a protector of Muslims in these lands, stimulating Turkish investments as well as support for civil society are some of the tools that Turkey used to increase his presence in the region.

Recent geopolitical developments indicate to Turkey that this influence through the above mentioned activities is not enough, and perhaps there is a need for a more direct penetration in the area. Based on this, the masterminds that stand behind Erdoğan have decided to influence directly through politics and political forces in Albanian lands.

According to the above mentioned article, It is considered that for this initiative, concrete steps are taken in a congress entitled: “International and Islamic threats”

⁹⁴⁵ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “New Macedonia Albanian Party Denies Erdogan Link”, **Balkan Insight**, 24.11.2014, <https://balkaninsight.com/2014/11/24/new-albanian-party-in-macedonia-denies-erdogan-connection/>, [09.04.2020].

⁹⁴⁶ Elida Zylbeari, “Zbardhet Strategjia për Hapjen e Partisë së Erdoganit në Shqipëri, Kosovë dhe Maqedoni”, **Portalb**, 06.06.2014, <https://portalb.mk/82647-zbardhet-strategjia-per-hapjen-e-partise-se-erdoganit-ne-shqiperi-kosove-dhe-maqedoni/>, [13.04.2020].

organized by the Center for Social and Economic Research on May 29-31, 2014, at the Hotel "Holiday inn-Airport" in Istanbul, under the direct patronage of Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Emrullah İşler. During the proceedings of this congress were discussed the last details of the plan to engage politically in Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania. In Macedonia, the structure and the people are ready, as is the public opinion. Opening the party is a matter of time, and all financial support will come directly from Ankara.⁹⁴⁷

For years now, associations directly affiliated with the JDP's people have been operating in Macedonia. The closest association with the JDP leadership in Macedonia is the "Vizion M" whose founder is Adnan Ismaili and led by Ramadan Aliti. Part of "Vizion M", which has opened its centers in Tetovo and Gostivar, is also the training center "Vizion Akademi", which provides foreign language courses and IT skills.⁹⁴⁸

Publishing House "Logos A", run by Adnan Ismaili as one of the most influential Muslim intellectuals in Macedonia and good friend of Ahmet Davutoğlu, is another institution which has close relations with JDP. According to Ali Pajaziti, "Logos-A" is considered as a cultural institution, as an alternative university of young intellectuals who have studied in Sarajevo and Turkey and who have managed to become the circle of Islamic intellectualism in Macedonia with traditional ideas which can be considered as Islamic modernists. Pajaziti describes this circle of the people around Logos-A as Albanian-Bosnian-Turkish synthesis, which is the initiator of private publications in all Albanian lands, and has managed to become the spokesperson of quality publications in various fields, from theology, philosophy, sociology, art, history, etc.⁹⁴⁹ Additionally Pajaziti says that in terms of intellectual traditions, this circle of people is influenced by the "Milli Görüş movement, as well as by intellectuals such as Mahattir Mohammad and Ismet Özel".⁹⁵⁰ "Logos A" also is in good relation with the Foundation for Science and Art (Bilim Sanat Vakfı), created by Ahmet Davutoğlu. This publishing house has

⁹⁴⁷ **Ibid.**

⁹⁴⁸ **Ibid.**

⁹⁴⁹ Pajaziti, **Islamët Shqiptarë: Trendet, Lëvizjet dhe Aktorët**, 38.

⁹⁵⁰ Kerem Öktem, "New Islamic Actors after the Wahhabi Intermezzo: Turkey's Return to the Muslim Balkans", **European Studies Centre University of Oxford**, (2010): 28.

translated a good number of Turkish and other Islamic thinkers, publishing the most important works of Islamic thought in Albanian language.⁹⁵¹

Another association with direct links to elements close to the JDP leadership is Merhamet (Mercy) Association based in Skopje. The founder of this association is again Adnan Ismaili, the director of the Publishing House “Logos A”. Merhamet Association has branches in Skopje, Tetovo, Kumanovo, Gostivar, Debar, Kichevo and Pristina. “Merhamet” works directly with the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish Cooperation Agency (TIKA), which also has offices in Tirana. Also, a good part of the “Merhamet” funds are received from another Turkish association, “İnsan Yardım Vakfı-IHH”.⁹⁵² In the web site of the organization it stresses that “The main reason of the establishment of this organization was to fill the cultural gap as well as enrichment of the spiritual life, including the work in the field of humanitarian aid which undoubtedly has been one of the most sensitive topics as a result of the bad social life, as well as creating a more favourable social well being for people in Macedonia”.⁹⁵³

“Elita Club”, led by Skënder Rexhepi-Zejd, is another organization that has a very close relationship with the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) and the associations “Vizion M”, “Islamic Youth Forum”, “Ensar” and “Köprü”. In January 2012, TIKA financed the establishment of a film studio of the “Elita Club” worth of 15,500 Euros. During the inauguration of this studio TIKA’s director in Macedonia was present.⁹⁵⁴

Other associations close to JDP are “Ensar” and “Köprü” based in Skopje. All the above associations make joint events or by cooperating with each other depending on the profile of the activity.⁹⁵⁵

On June 13, 2013, the associations “Vizion M”, “Ensar”, “Kopru”, “Merhamet” and “Elita club” organized a support march on the streets of Skopje in solidarity with Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, who was facing protests from Gezi Park in Istanbul.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵¹ **Ibid.**

⁹⁵² Zylbeari, “Zbardhet Strategjia për Hapjen”.

⁹⁵³ <http://merhamet.mk/features/historiku/>, [15.04.2020].

⁹⁵⁴ Zylbeari, “Zbardhet strategjia për hapjen”.

⁹⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

In 2016 the non-governmental organization "Elita Club" has called on all citizens of Macedonia to join the protest march organized by the network of Turkish non-governmental organizations in Macedonia (MATUSITEB). The aim of the event was to support the justice of the Turkish people, President Erdoğan and Turkey, but also to express gratitude for the "Albanian-Turkish brotherhood". This protest march took place after the attempted coup in Turkey in 2016.⁹⁵⁷

Except the civil sector and the publishing house, the media factor has not been absent too. Shenja Magazine founded by Zeqirija Ibrahim and Afrim Gashi, close associates of Logos-A, have been publishing the magazine since 2011. Since its establishment, this magazine has managed to publish about 110 issues⁹⁵⁸ Within this magazine, there have been a significant number of articles related to Turkey. Among them, we can distinguish titles as "Erdoğan's Middle East Agenda",⁹⁵⁹ "Davutoğlu's Excellent Diplomacy",⁹⁶⁰ "Neo-Ottomanism, False Alarm",⁹⁶¹ "The Invention of the Neo-Ottoman Danger",⁹⁶² "Imaginary Neo-Ottomanism",⁹⁶³ "Interview with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu: We are proud of the alliance with Albania"⁹⁶⁴, "Between Turkey and Europe"⁹⁶⁵, "The War of the Turkish Citizens for Self-Government"⁹⁶⁶, "Turkey is stronger one year after the coup"⁹⁶⁷, "Turkophobia offers no solution for Europe nor for us"⁹⁶⁸, "Turkey in the new historical" silence"⁹⁶⁹ etc. In 2015, apart from Shenja

⁹⁵⁶ **Ibid**; "Qindra Protestues në Shkup dhe Gostivar në Përkrahje të Erdoganit", **Interesi Publik**, <https://interesipublik.wordpress.com/2013/06/15/qindra-protestues-ne-shkup-dhe-gostivar-ne-perkrahje-te-erdoganit/amp/>, [14.04.2020].

⁹⁵⁷ "Shkup, Nesër Mbahet Protestë për Përkrahjen e Erdoganit dhe Turqisë", **Portalb**, 27.07.2016, <https://portalb.mk/301377-shkup-neser-mbahet-proteste-per-perkrahjen-e-erdoganit-dhe-turqise/>, [12.04.2020].

⁹⁵⁸ Pajaziti, **Islamët Shqiptarë: Trendet, Lëvizjet dhe Aktorët**, 39.

⁹⁵⁹ Ibrahim Kalin, "Agjenda e Lindjes se Mesme se Erdoganit", **Shenja**, No.6 (October, 2011): 64.

⁹⁶⁰ Richard Falk, "Diplomacia e Shkelqyer e Davutogllut", **Shenja**, ed.Afrim Gashi, No.8 (December, 2011): 75.

⁹⁶¹ Ergys Mertiri, "Neo-Osmanizmi, Alarm i Rreme", **Shenja**, No. 12 (April,2012): 57.

⁹⁶² Nebil Çika, "Shpikja e Rrezikur Neo Otoman", **Shenja**, No. 13 (May, 2012): 38.

⁹⁶³ Nexhmedin Ademi, "Neo Otomanizmi Imaginar", **Shenja**, No. 14 (June, 2012): 48.

⁹⁶⁴ "Interviste me Ministrin e Jashtem te Turqise Ahmet Davutoglu: Ndjehemi Krenar për Aleancën me Shqipërinë", **Shenja**, No.17 (September, 2012): 19.

⁹⁶⁵ Enis Sulstarova, "Midis Turqisë dhe Evropës", **Shenja**, No. 17 (September 2012): 33.

⁹⁶⁶ Adam Mcconnel, "Lufta e Qytetareve Turq per Veteqeverisje", **Shenja**, No.73 (May, 2017): 54.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibrahim Kalin, "Turqia eshte me e Forte Nje Vit pas Grushtit te Shtetit". **Shenja**, No.76 (August, 2017): 73.

⁹⁶⁸ Milazim Krasniqi, "Turkofobia nuk Ofron Zgjidhje as per Evropën as per Ne", **Shenja**, No.81 (January,2018): 25.

⁹⁶⁹ Muxhahid Ismaili, "Turqia ne 'Heshtjen' e Re Historike", **Shenja**, No.87 (July 2018): 60.

magazine was established Shenja television as a medium with a bilingual program in Albanian and Macedonian, which started to broadcast on the territory of Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and the Albanian diaspora. Chief editor of Tv Shenja was appointed Ismail Sinani.⁹⁷⁰

It should be noted that all the above initiatives, associations and media, are not done in the name of the strategy of the Turkish state, but it seems that this structure headed by Adnan Ismaili has close relations with JDP's people, particularly with Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. All the associations belonging to this circle of people seems that worked to prepare the ground for the opening of a political subject, a democratic conservative party with a strong Islamic reference similar to the JDP of Turkey.

The previous assumptions for the creation of a political structure, which was missing until 2014, was capitalised with the establishment of Besa Movement. Names such as Afrim Gashi, Zeqerija Ibrahim, Skënder Rexhepi-Zejdi, Orhan Murtezani, Emad Mehmedi and others who were part of the umbrella organizations of this circle of people, now were actively involved in the Besa Movement. The only one of distinguished personalities of this structure who was not involved in this Movement was Adnan Ismaili. But it is assumed that he is the shadow mastermind of the Besa.

There have also been claims from local political actors but also from international experts on Balkan issues, that the Besa Movement has direct support from Ankara. According to the deputy of Democratic Union for Integration Artan Grubi:

“Besa movement is a bigger threat for the Turkish parties [in Macedonia] and not so much for the Albanian parties. Grubi hinted that Besa Movement had Turkish connections and suggested that these could damage its chances of winning votes. “Foreign ideologies do great damage to national processes and history has shown that they have never been accepted by the Albanians.”⁹⁷¹

David L. Phillips, director of the Institute for Peace at Columbia University in the United States and a well-known expert on Balkan issues, regarding the political situation in Macedonia and the debates over the Besa Movement says that:

⁹⁷⁰ “Во Понеделник Почнува Двојазичната Телевизија Шења”, **MKD**, 12.11.2015, <https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/v-ponedelnik-pochnuva-dvojazichnata-televizija-shenja>, [11.04.2020].

⁹⁷¹ “Grubi: Lëvizja BESA? Ideologji e Huaj që Konkurrin Vetëm Partitë Turke”, **Telegrafi**, 14.11.2014, <https://telegrafi.com/grubi-levizja-besa-ideologji-e-huaj-qe-konkurron-vetem-partite-turke/>, [14.04.2020].

“We have a problem with Besa”, which It is not in fact a Macedonian political party, but an extension of Erdoğan's agenda. Thus, Albanians and Macedonians should work for the interests of this country, not for the interests of Turkey, and if they are able to do so, then progress will be made, and together Albanians and Macedonians will be part of it.”⁹⁷²

According to him, the parties should be local, should reflect local goals and be funded by local sources, and until Besa opens the books and prove that its money does not come from Turkey and Qatar, we do not know if it really act as a political party from Macedonia.⁹⁷³

While according to the report of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) for the Western Balkans, the Besa Movement has entered in the political arena in Macedonia, supported by the JDP of Erdoğan. In the report of KAS is stressed that Erdoğan’s objective was that through the Besa Movement to have influence over communities that are considered to be the bastion of Gülen network in order to have control of these “Jemaats”⁹⁷⁴ – as a most important step in the “conquest” of the people belonging to the Islamic community in Macedonia.⁹⁷⁵

Regarding the allegations that within this party has presence of prominent religious elements and that Besa Movement is a subject or branch of the Turkish JDP, has been rejected by Besa's leadership calling them slander, manipulation and black propaganda against this Movement as a result of the fear of losing power by other Albanian parties but also by the eventual disappearance from the political scene in Macedonia.

Afrim Gashi, one of the main leaders of this movement, says that:

“We understand that this accusations and slanders are made by those who are afraid of losing power, and in this context we understand their concern, but, on the other hand, they have had the opportunity to prove how much they worked for the people, but they didn't do it, and now they are slandering others just to save their power.”⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷² **Ibid.**

⁹⁷³ **Ibid.**

⁹⁷⁴ Cemaat in Turkish means community. Cemaat is the main organizational form of Sufi orders that are present in Turkey since their proscription in 1925. For more see: Ezgi Guner, “NGOization of Islamic Education: The Post-Coup Turkish State and Sufi Orders in Africa South of the Sahara”, **Religions** Vol. 12, No. 24 (2020): 1.

⁹⁷⁵ Johannes D. Rey, Zoran Ilievski, Siniša Aleksoski and Davor Pašoski, “The Influence of External Actors in the Western Balkans - A Map of Geopolitical Players”, **Report of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung** (2018): 27.

⁹⁷⁶ Naser Pajaziti, “ ‘BESA’ Synon Rimëkëmbjen e Shqiptarëve në Maqedoni”, **Albinfo**, 22.05.2015, <https://www.albinfo.ch/besa-subjekti-i-ri-politik-qe-po-synon-rimekembjen-e-shqiptareve/>, [14.04.2020].

Gashi categorically rejects this allegations stressing that there is no a single argument that Besa Movement is a branch of some external political subject. Gashi presents this movement as an autochthonous, authentic and autonomous Albanian movement.⁹⁷⁷

Also the vice president of Besa Movement, Zeqerija Ibrahim, categorically denies any connection between the Besa Movement and Turkey, accusing the Democratic Union for Integration, which is part of the government, of slandering Besa, because they feel they are losing power. Ibrahim also denies that the Besa Movement has received financial funding from Turkey. He says that the Movement Besa is financed from domestic sources, mainly Albanian businessmen from Macedonia and Albanian emigrants.⁹⁷⁸

Despite debates that involved Turkey's current leadership in founding the Besa Movement, Besa entered in the race for the first time for the parliamentary elections in 2016.

The surprise of the 2016 elections was exactly the result of the Besa Movement, which received 57,927 votes or 4.87%. Out of 120 MPs, they won 5 seats in the parliament. It was interesting that the motto "If you believe in God" was in the promotional video of Besa! Given that religion plays a major role in the Albanian population, some certainly voted because of religious sentiment. But the results have been interpreted as votes won by candidates who were not directly involved in any scandals and not consumed politically.⁹⁷⁹ According to Sefer Tahiri, Democratic Union for Integration also contributed to the good result of Besa with its campaign against this party, and it may have unconsciously projected the new political binom in the Albanian bloc DUI-BESA.⁹⁸⁰

While one year later, in 2017, in the local elections, the Besa Movement again surprised with the results obtained, but this time in a negative context. Out of a total of 84 municipalities, this movement managed to take only the rural municipality of Zhelina in

⁹⁷⁷ **Ibid.**

⁹⁷⁸ "S'kemi Lidhje me Erdoganin, Turqia Shtet Mik", **Zeri**, 12.10.2016, <https://zeri.info/aktuale/120718/s-kemi-lidhje-me-erdoganin-turqia-shtet-mik/>, [15.04.2020].

⁹⁷⁹ Sefer Tahiri, "Победата на ДУИ во Сенка на БЕСА и СДСМ", **Prizma**, 13.12.2016, <https://prizma.mk/pobedata-na-dui-vo-senka-na-besa-sdsm/>, [15.04.2020].

⁹⁸⁰ **Ibid.**

the city of Tetovo. Its candidate Blerim Sejdiu has managed to win in this small rural municipality against the DUI candidate Fatmir Izairi, with a small difference of 344 votes.⁹⁸¹

After the local elections, the Besa Movement faced an intra-party split, operating on two different fronts. Besa, which was hopeful and aimed to be a powerful Albanian opposition entity, for a very short time within its structure was created the clash for power that led to the creation of two groups. The following sub-chapter will elaborate the reasons for the split and the further functioning of the two factions.

3.2.6.1. The Split of Besa Movement and the Creation of Alternativa as a New Political Party

The Besa Movement as a new option on the Albanian political scene in the Republic of Macedonia initially brought a new enthusiasm to Albanians. Given that Albanians may have begun to feel tired of existing political entities, they saw hope in the Besa Movement. After the initial success of the Besa Movement in the parliamentary elections of 2016, for a very short time, i.e. a year later, in the local elections experienced a political fiasco, winning only one rural municipality out of 84 possible.

By negatively surprising this result, intra-movement clashes began, trying to find the culprit for this failure. In fact, two wings were created within the movement. The “Skopje Wing” within which were the founders of the Besa Movement, such as Afrim Gashi, Zeqerija Ibrahim, Skender Rexhepi-Zejdi, Orhan Murtezani and others. While in the other wing was that of Tetovo, headed by the leader of this movement Bilal Kasami.

The 5 deputies of Besa were also divided on two sides. Deputies Fadil Zendeli and Teuta Bilalli were with the "Tetovo wing" who have been close to the leader of this Movement Bilal Kasami since the beginning, while their other colleagues, Afrim Gashi,

⁹⁸¹ “Ky është heroi i vetëm "me besë" në këto zgjedhje”, **Fax**, 29.10.2017, <http://fax.al/read/news/12574759/16342864/ky-eshte-heroi-i-vetem-me-bese-ne-keto-zgjedhje>, [14.04.2020].

Nexhmedin Karemani and Rexhep Memedi decided to stay with the “Wing of Skopje”.⁹⁸²

The rift was also evidenced by the holding of parallel central councils. In Tetovo, Bilall Kasami was elected interim party leader until the first congress. While in Skopje, was hold another meeting of the Central Council, where it was decided to dismiss Bilall Kasami from the post of the leader of the party, and Nexhbedin Kahremani was elected as an interim party leader until the congress.⁹⁸³

Bilall Kasami holded the party’s official stamps and defended his legitimacy to lead the party in court. He has insisted that the majority of Besa members are with him and that his opponents will be forced to form another party after the February congress. Kasami claimed that the group opposing him is led by people with deep ties in the NGO sector who “were afraid of losing their posts” in the party leadership after the congress he summoned.⁹⁸⁴

While according to Orhan Murtezani from the fraction of Skopje, Kasami was dismissed by the majority of the members of the council. Murtezani said that “We will hold our scheduled congress, and if the Kasami supporters want to face the majority, they should come to our congress”.⁹⁸⁵

It is worth mentioning that the two sides of the Besa Movement set two different dates for holding the congress. The Skopje wing has set February 18, 2018 for the holding of the party's first congress, while the Tetovo wing on March 24, 2018. At congress held on February 18th, the Skopje wing elected Afrim Gashi as president, while the Tetovo wing reelected Bilall Kasami as party chairman on February 24th.⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸² “Shkup, Përçarje Brenda Lëvizjes ‘Besa’ “, **Klan**, 10.01.2018, <https://tvklan.al/shkup-percarje-brenda-levizjes-besa/>, [15.04.2020].

⁹⁸³ “Përçahet Lëvizja BESA, Një Parti me Dy Kryetarë?!” , **Ina Online**, 06.01.2018, <https://ina-online.net/percahet-levizja-besa-nje-parti-dy-kryetare/>, [14.04.2020].

⁹⁸⁴ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Split Rocks Macedonia’s Ethnic Albanian Besa Party”, **Balkan Insight**, 09.02.2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/02/09/split-rocks-albanian-opposition-party-in-macedonia-02-08-2018/>, [15.04.2020].

⁹⁸⁵ **Ibid.**

⁹⁸⁶ “Движење БЕСА, Двете Крила Тврдат Дека се Легитимни”, 03.04.2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AAgCk1S-kY>, [15.04.2020].

The other problem that both sides had was the issue of the name of the Movement. Both sides called themselves the Besa Movement until the case was finally settled in court. The Skopje wing of the Besa Movement demanded an administrative change of name from the Besa Movement to Besa, but the Basic Court Skopje 2 rejected this request.⁹⁸⁷

After the decision of the Court, Bilall Kasami before the media stated that:

“Today we appear before the public to announce that officially our legitimacy given to us by the structures of the BESA Movement received a legal epilogue. The Basic Court Skopje 2 took a decision that we have said many times in our public appearances that the Besa Movement is one and that is us. This decision of the Court rejects the request of the other informal group, informing them that the party bodies are elected by its members.”⁹⁸⁸

In a situation where, even in legal terms, the Skopje wing failed to change the name of the Movement, there was no other option but to create a new political entity with a new name. So on February 17, 2019, the Central Assembly of the “Skopje Wing” decided to form a new party at the request of the members to end the trial over who is the real successor of Besa Movement.⁹⁸⁹

The new name of the wing of the Besa Movement from Skopje will now be called Alternativa. This was decided in the Central Assembly of the Skopje wing. Afrim Gashi was elected chairman of the party, while the party's secretary was elected Skender Rexhepi-Zejd.⁹⁹⁰

In a statement to the media, Skender Rexhepi-Zejd stressed that Afrim Gashi, together with other MPs Nexhmedin Kahremani and Rexhep Mehmeti, will act in the Assembly as MPs of Alternative. According to Rexhepi, the three deputies of Besa now are

⁹⁸⁷ Daliborka Demjanska, “Судот одлучи-Касами Останува Претседател на БЕСА”, **Telma**, 06.02.2018, <https://telma.com.mk/sudot-odluchi-kasami-ostanuva-pretседател-na-besa/>, [15.04.2020].

⁹⁸⁸ “Bilall Kasami: Gjykata Vendosi, BESA është e Jona”, **Portalb**, 03.04.2018, <https://portalb.mk/515947-levizja-besa-me-kryetar-bilall-kasamin-e-filloi-konferencen-per-media-video/>, [16.04.2020].

⁹⁸⁹ “Беса Остана на Касами, Алтернатива е Новото Име на Партијата на Африм Гаши”, **MKD**, 18.02.2019, <https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/besa-ostana-na-kasami-alternativa-e-novoto-ime-na-partijata-na-afrim-gashi>, [16.04.2020].

⁹⁹⁰ “Partia e Gashit do të Quhet “Alternativa”, Lëvizja Besa i Mbetet Kasamit”, **Nezavisen**, 18.02.2020, <https://nezavisen.mk/partia-e-gashit-do-te-quhet-alternativa-levizja-besa-i-mbetet-kasamit/>, [15.04.2020].

deputies of Alternative, and this is how their functioning will continue. Other possibilities for political engagement within the Assembly will be seen.⁹⁹¹

This structure of people under the Alternativa party continued to maintain contacts with Turkey. Alternativa led by Afrim Gashi during August 2018 paid a visit to Turkey to hold meetings with the top Turkish state leaders. The delegation of this party led by its leader Afrim Gashi was received by the Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şentop, a personality of the AKP of Albanian origin. The meeting underlined Turkey's support with the ratification of the protocol for Macedonia's membership in NATO and for the continuous contribution and support of the Turkish state.⁹⁹²

Another meeting was with JDP Deputy Chairman Numan Kurtulmuş. This meeting was held as stated to initiate formal cooperation between the Alternative and the JDP party as two right-wing parties. Both sides agreed that cooperation should be developed and deepened further, and agreed that as soon as possible it should be formalized through signing a memorandum of cooperation. Gashi, accompanied by the other party officials, met with other representatives of the JDP, but also with the other officials of Turkish institutions.⁹⁹³

The President of Alternativa, Afrim Gashi, accompanied by the party's spokesman, Orhan Murtezani, also had a meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to Macedonia, Mrs. Tulin Erkal Kara. The political situation in the country and Turkey's constructive and friendly role in the Euro-Atlantic path of Northern Macedonia were discussed at the meeting. Turkish Ambassador Tulin Erkal Kara thanked President Gashi, emphasizing

⁹⁹¹ Adnan Qaili, "Gashi me 'Alternativë' të re, Lëvizja Besa i Mbetet Kasamit", **Alsat-M**, 29.02.2018, <http://alsat-m.tv/gashi-me-alternative-te-re-levizja-besa-i-mbetet-kasamit/>, [16.04.2020].

⁹⁹² "Kryetari i Parlamentit të Turqisë Priti në Vizitë Afrim Gashin", **Fax**, 02.08.2019, <http://fax.al/read/news/21442955/21084675/kryetari-i-parlamentit-te-turqise-priti-ne-vizite-afrim-gashin>, [16.04.2020].

⁹⁹³ "Alternativa po Forcon Bashkëpunimin me Partinë AK Partisë të Erdoganit", **Ina Online**, 04.08.2019, <https://ina-online.net/alternativa-po-forcon-bashkepunimin-me-partine-ak-partise-te-erdoganit/>, [16.04.2020].

that Alternativa, as a center right party, is contributing to progressive values and Albanian-Turkish fraternal relations.⁹⁹⁴

In Macedonia's early parliamentary elections in July 2020, Alternativa in coalition with the Alliance for Albanians will run in these elections. The main battle of this alliance in the Albanian electorate will be again with the Democratic Union for Integration.

3.2.7. Concluding Remarks

The period from 2002 marks the JDP coming to power, which brought changes in both domestic and foreign policy. In the context of foreign policy in the Balkan region, JDP continued the active policy of the 1990s in this region. While the 1990s were characterized as turbulent years for the Balkans, Turkey's foreign policy mainly focused on political and security issues, trying to contribute to the resolution of the Yugoslav conflicts. The post-conflict period of the Balkans for the JDP presented an opportunity which it did not just benefited on the active diplomatic initiatives of the 1990s but also incorporated new elements such as support to the Euro-Integration process for the Balkan countries, economic investments, conflict resolution and mediation processes, active approach of civil society, support of educational and cultural institutions, etc. Trying to implement these tools, JDP objective was to take Turkey to another stage, aiming to be influential actor in her close regions.

The first phase of the JDP's foreign policy in the Western Balkans focused on the intensification of bilateral meetings with the countries of this region. In these meetings, it can be said that among other things, two main issues have been a priority for both Turkey and the Western Balkan countries. First, Euro-Atlantic integration. This means that Turkey was a member of NATO, while in 2005 opened EU membership negotiations. In fact, this period was considered as the Europeanization of Turkey's foreign policy, which implies that Turkey as a candidate country tried to fit both domestic and foreign policy with the European Union.

⁹⁹⁴ “Afrim Gashi Takohet me Ambasadoren Turke në Shkup, znj.Tulin Erkal Kara”, **Alternativa**, 15.11.2019, alternativa.mk/2019/11/15/afirim-gashi-takohet-me-ambasadoren-turke-ne-shkup-znj-tulin-erkal-kara/, [16.04.2020].

While the countries of the Western Balkans aimed their integration in both structures, both in NATO and in the EU. Turkish leadership in all meetings with the leaders of this region openly supported their integration process, emphasizing that are ready to offer help particularly in terms of integration in NATO, given that Turkey is a relevant country within alliance. On the other hand, Turkish leadership thought that her integration into EU would be more applicable in case of cooperation and exchange of experiences regarding the integration process with the countries of the Western Balkans. Turkey also saw a greater chance of EU integration if it manages to enter into an enlargement package with Western Balkans. But none of Turkey's integration projections resulted in achieving the goal of joining the EU as a result of blocking the negotiating chapters by some member states.

The second topic that was kept high on the agenda between Turkey and Western Balkan states was the economic cooperation, more specifically the economic investments. The countries of the Western Balkans, some of which emerged from the conflicts of the 1990s, were "hungry" for foreign investment. In this regard, they saw Turkey as a potential country that has capacity to invest in the region.

And not coincidentally, in all bilateral meetings during this period, the Turkish leadership took with her a delegation of powerful businessmen from Turkey to see the area as well as to check investment opportunities. And it can be said that since the JDP came to power, Turkish investments in the Balkan countries have significantly increased. Today, Turkish investors in the Balkans are present in various sectors such as telecommunications, textiles, food products, construction, airports, banking sector, etc. According to the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Turkey, the cumulative amount of Turkish direct investment in the Balkan countries in 2007 was \$ 3.5 billion while 10 years later, more exactly by the end of 2016 reached about \$ 10 billion. This shows that over the last decade Turkey has strengthened her economic relations with the Balkan countries in terms of investment.⁹⁹⁵

⁹⁹⁵ Erhan Türbedar, "Koment – Investimet Direkte të Turqisë në Ballkanin Perëndimor", **TRT**, 03.10.2017, <https://www.trt.net.tr/shqip/ekonomia/2017/10/03/koment-investimet-direkte-te-turqise-ne-ballkanin-perendimor-818930>, [03.04.2020].

Decisions by EU member states to block negotiating chapters fade away Turkey's ambitions for the European integration process. Given such circumstances, Turkish leadership seems to have seen the right momentum to pursue an independent foreign policy, especially in her close regions. The booster of this approach is considered to be Ahmet Davutoğlu. The period in which Davutoğlu appointment in the position of foreign minister and later prime minister was considered as the second phase of JDP's foreign policy characterized by an active approach to regional-global engagements through elements such as economic investments, mediation attempts, active approach of Turkish official agencies/ organizations, civil society, cultural activities, etc. Undoubtedly without excluding the promotion of the main motto of Turkish diplomacy "zero conflicts with neighbors" which was to be the main "asset" of imposing Turkey as a factor that will create a peaceful environment with neighboring countries and regions. In fact, in this period Turkey expanded its range of action in Western Balkans. In addition to economic investments, Turkey re-established great relations with Serbia, took the responsibility of mediator between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina creating the trilateral mechanism, as well as having active approach by agencies/organizations supported by Turkish state. TIKA, Yunus Emre, Diyanet and YTB with the development of various projects enabled the citizens of this region to have a closer interaction with Turkey. Diplomatic and academic circles named this period as Neo-Ottomanism. In an affirmative context, the term describes a Turkish foreign policy that derives from the legitimacy as a longtime imperial power in her close regions such as the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus. At its worst, this term suggests hegemonic ulterior motives behind Turkey's new activism.⁹⁹⁶ The dilemmas over the Neo Ottoman discourse grew even more after some cases like Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo in 2009, request from the Turkish leadership to change the history books in Kosovo as well as the famous phrase of Turkish Prime Minister of that time Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Prizren emphasizing that "Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo". But, in general, apart from particular situations, during this period there was no deep crisis that could damage Turkey's relations with the countries of this region. The year 2016 opened a new page for Turkey as well as regarding her relations with countries of the Balkan region.

⁹⁹⁶ Schleifer, "Turkey's Neo-Ottoman Problem", [23.11.2019].

Initially, Davutoğlu's resignation from the post of Prime Minister and immediately after this, coup attempt by FETÖ's network, caused a "earthquake" in Turkey. This circumstances obliged Turkey to restructure her policy in the Balkans. Now the main priority for Turkey was the fight against the FETÖ network that will be elaborated in the next chapter.



4. PERSONIFICATION OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNDER RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN AND FIGHT AGAINST FETÖ NETWORK IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (2016-2021)

In the second decade of the 2000s, Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkan region was characterized by the continuation of its active presence. Like the countries of the Western Balkans, Turkey has had a strong interest in its integration into the European Union over the past decade. It is no coincidence that this period was described by academic circles as Europeanization of Turkish foreign Foreign Policy. Turkey under the leadership of the JDP was highlighted with vigorous commitment to the implementation of the criterias requested by the EU. But soon this dose of optimism began to fade away as the accession negotiations have reached a stalemate, upon the resistance of Turkey to recognize the sovereignty of the Greek Cypriot state. As a result of this, the EU decided to reduce the speed of accession negotiations with Turkey.

With the disappointment of the European integration process and the arrival of Ahmet Davutoğlu as Turkey's foreign minister, Turkish foreign policy began to take a different direction. In fact, the Turkish foreign minister's claim was that Turkey has the potential to lead an independent foreign policy with a pro-active and multidimensional approach. This approach was also present in the Balkan region. Through frequent meetings of the Turkish political leadership with the leadership of the Balkan countries, the efforts of the Turkish leadership in resolving conflicts, trade growth with this region and the activities of government-related organizations which aimed to have more open communication with the citizens of Balkan countries, were some of the means that Turkey used in order to impose itself as an important factor of this region.

This meant that on the one hand, Turkey showed good will and readiness to have good relations with the countries of the Western Balkans, while on the other hand, certain situations put into question Turkey's “good will / idealistic” intentions in the Balkans. During this period there were situations when Turkey through diplomatic coercion tried

to achieve its goals. Pressure from the Turkish political leadership to change history books in Kosovo, a request to close schools and media affiliated with Fethullah Gulen's network (FETÖ), MIT's operation in Kosovo to arrest FETÖ members, were some of the actions taken by Turkey in this period.

In fact, the second decade of the 2000s brought also a new momentum in Turkish foreign policy that was the transition from Neo-Ottomanism to personification of foreign policy under president Erdoğan. This came to the fore with the departure of Ahmet Davutoğlu from JDP and the takeover of foreign policy by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. What characterizes this period of transition is the complete marginalization of the figure of Ahmet Davutoğlu from the leadership of the JDP, who until his departure from the post of Prime Minister was considered as one of the determinant figures within JDP as well as the architect of Turkish foreign policy since 2002. This impression is also somewhat expressed in the Balkan region. It can be said that currently, the presence of Ahmet Davutoğlu in politics and media does not have the same relevance as it has prior to 2016, but in the academic context, scholars of the Balkan region even today take as a starting point for analysis his academic writings and thoughts regarding Turkey's foreign policy. University professor, Vladimir Ajzenhamer, is in the same line of thought, emphasizing that political elite are primarily those that dictate the discourse from which the "memory" of Davutoğlu is banished. Such a discourse is then accepted by the mainstream media. According to Ajzenhamer, the reason for that is the belief that the former leading Turkish foreign policy "architect" and ideologist is out of Erdoğan's "mercy", and that his recent political activity as the leader of the opposition further deepens that disfavor.⁹⁹⁷ Ajzenhamer also points out that most of Balkan leaders have established an (almost) personal and seemingly intimate relationship with Turkish President Erdoğan, and that they are well aware of his intolerance toward his own opposition, by ignoring Davutoğlu's merits and continued presence on the political scene, they are trying to invest in Erdoğan by supporting his side in his clash with

⁹⁹⁷ Interview with Vladimir Ajzenhamer, university professor in the field of international relations at the Faculty of Security at the University of Belgrade. Professor Ajzenhamer is expert on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkan region. 07.07.2021.

political enemies.⁹⁹⁸ Lastly, even Ajzenhamer share the stance that in the academic perspective, scholars from the Balkan region very vividly remember Davutoğlu's ideas and policies and even today analyze him in their research papers, at conferences and in their analyzes on alternative media - e.g., local independent tv stations (without national frequency), internet portals and geopolitical podcasts, broadcasting on the YouTube platform.⁹⁹⁹ University professor Mevludin Ibishi has a similar attitude with that of Ajzenhmaer, emphasizing that in terms of daily Turkish political scheme, it might be the case for complete marginalization of Ahmet Davutoğlu, having in mind his political activism in Turkey. But in context of academic perspective, his name is being well discussed, criticized and his impact in Turkish foreign policy will continue to be analyzed, particularly will be analyzed from the foreign academic provenience.¹⁰⁰⁰

Political commentators and scholars in the field, define the post-Davutoğlu period in Turkey-Western Balkans relations also as the period of the league of autocrats. According to Hamdi Fırat Büyük and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, “Erdoğan has established network with other Balkan leaders who are facing with criticism for their increasingly authoritarian rule.”¹⁰⁰¹

4.1. Personification of Turkish Foreign Policy

Turkey's presence in the Western Balkans has been characterized by several phases since the 1990s. The first phase of the 1990s marked the establishment of bilateral relations with the countries of the former Yugoslavia and its positioning with the western community in the face of Serbian aggression in the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. The second phase marks the arrival of the JDP in power since 2002 with a Euro-Atlantic spirit, which aimed Turkey's integration into the European Union but also its cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans toward this journey. In this regard, Turkey has advocated for the NATO integration of these countries. The third

⁹⁹⁸ **Ibid.**

⁹⁹⁹ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁰⁰ Interview with Mevludin Ibishi, university professor in the field of international relations at the Faculty of Law at the International Balkan University. Professor Ibishi is expert on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkan region. 12.07.2021.

¹⁰⁰¹ Hamdi Fırat Büyük and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, “The Role of Leadership Networks in Turkey - Balkan Relations in the AKP Era”, **Turkish Policy Quarterly**, Vol. 18, No .3 (2019): 123.

phase marks the so-called Neo-Ottomanism with the arrival of Ahmet Davutoğlu as foreign minister and the creation of a new approach to Turkish foreign policy in the region. This meant a more proactive approach by activating various instruments, such as economic, social, cultural and diplomatic. The idea of Turkey was not returning to the Balkans through the instruments of coercion, but through the tools such as economy, culture and diplomacy, which are acceptable to the peoples of this region. Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo in 2009 sparked debates over the Neo-Ottoman discourse in the Balkans. The recent phase of Turkey's foreign policy after Davutoğlu's resignation as prime minister, is described as a personification of foreign policy under the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

What characterizes Turkish foreign policy in the post-Davutoğlu era is the significant shift from the “general activism” to the “priority setting”, taking strategic decisions in terms of regional engagements with more pragmatic and effective approach.¹⁰⁰² Compared with the Davutoğlu era where foreign policy was more multi-dimensional and multi-actor, as well as more regionally and globally active, current foreign policy since 2015, especially since the last quarter of 2016, is more focused, selective, and globally limited.¹⁰⁰³ The reason for the limitation of the multidimensional foreign policy and the active involvement in regional and global contexts has to do with the new situation in which threats of national security from both external and internal factors are in the spotlight. The ceasefire that broke down with the PKK in 2015 led to successive violent events in Turkey's southeast region. In addition, between 2015 and 2016, Turkey faced with several terrorist attacks, some of which were focused against targets in big cities like Ankara and Istanbul. The peak was the bloody day of July 15, 2016, which included a military coup attempt. Turkish citizens generally believe this was prepared by the people of the Gülen movement, aiming to overthrow President Erdoğan and the JDP government.¹⁰⁰⁴ Worsening of the situation in context of security in general terms and the coup d'etat strive in particular, pushed the Turkish government in the “survival

¹⁰⁰² E. Fuat Keyman, “A New Turkish Foreign Policy: Towards Proactive ‘Moral Realism’ “, **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2017): 65.

¹⁰⁰³ **Ibid**, 64.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Lars Haugom, “Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erdogan: A Change in International Orientation?”, **Comparative Strategy**, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2019): 213.

mode,” making national security concerns the top priority of Turkey’s foreign policy.¹⁰⁰⁵ This situation shows that Turkey will follow “a proactive security policy with the use of military power” inside the country, but if necessary also outside of her borders without excluding the unilateral military operations.¹⁰⁰⁶

Since 2015, Turkey as a regional power has been gripped by this negative environment in which it faced a series of significant security risks. As in the post-Cold War period, during the 1990s the potential of Turkey's hard power became more evident in bilateral and international talks. The influx of Syrian refugees (more than 3 million people sought refuge in Turkey), the ongoing war with the PKK, PYG & YPG terrorist organizations, and particularly its global war against FETÖ, created a picture that the pivotal role of Turkey was to be perceived more in security terms rather than soft power approach. “Turkey’s military and geopolitical hard power capacities began to draw attention”.¹⁰⁰⁷

These circumstances make it very difficult for Turkey to implement her policy with the soft power tools. The liberal approach resulted to be unsustainable and eventually was very difficult to sell to the public, which faced crises especially in the financial context. The political leadership’s earlier commitments gradually began to fade and also began to lose the sense of ownership to the regional and international issues.¹⁰⁰⁸

Taking into consideration that at the moment, Turkey’s top security priority is to develop a technologically advanced national defense industry. Turkish president Erdoğan has emphasized that, “It’s not possible for nations that cannot be strong and independent in the field of defence to look to their future with confidence”. According to Erdoğan, the defence industry is not an area that can handle stagnation. Turkey has to go further and produce more advanced products in order to meet its national defence and security needs.¹⁰⁰⁹ The main objective is to become self-sufficient in terms of the availability of the arms. This would be achieved through the cooperative enterprises with

¹⁰⁰⁵ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁰⁶ **Ibid**, 211.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Keyman, “A New Turkish Foreign Policy”, 63.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Bulent Aras, “The Crisis and Change in Turkish Foreign Policy After July 15”, **Alternatives: Global, Local, Political**, Vol. 44, No.1 (2019): 6.

¹⁰⁰⁹ “Turkey Resolutely Pursuing to Advance Defence Industry: Erdogan”, **TRT World**, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-resolutely-pursuing-to-advance-defence-industry-erdogan-39136>, [27.08.2020].

foreign producers that include technology transfers to Turkey, and would be sustained by selling defense equipment to the third states.¹⁰¹⁰

Among the important impacts on Turkish foreign policy during this period was the change of the political system and the shift from a parliamentary system to a presidential.¹⁰¹¹ With this transition to a “strong” presidential system, the Presidential

¹⁰¹⁰ Haugom, “Turkish foreign policy under Erdogan”, 212.

¹⁰¹¹ The idea and debates for the presidential system in Turkey are present since 1980 as a result of coalition governments established between 1961 and 1980 characterized by political instability. Discussions regarding the change of political system in Turkey under the 1982 constitution, were intensified in the period between 1987 and 1990. The protagonist of this idea is considered to be Turgut Özal (8th President). Özal on behalf of prime minister and late president proposed the idea for a presidential system in Turkey, advocating more concrete debates about this after he became president of the republic. Özal emphasized that presidential system would bring two important benefits for Turkey. First, would expand Turkey’s global power and second, would create political stability within state. At the time, he stressed that, “If Turkey want to become one of the top ten or top five nations in the world, then we need to take an initiative. The only chance would be to transition to a presidential system”. Subsequently, the debate over the change of political system continued during the 1990s, under the President Süleyman Demirel (9th President). At the time, Demirel stressed that, “I have seen six governments in four years of my time. From this picture, something is not right here. The executive should be independent from the legislative and judiciary together have to be able to check and balance the executive appropriately. This can succeed only in presidential system”. President Demirel general idea was that the system change would provide political stability. According to Serap Gur, “The idea of a system change was not based on the electorate, but it supported President Suleyman Demirel’s desire to stay in power for one more term. Apart of this, at the time the parliament rejected any proposal related to constitutional amendment. As a result, a new president was elected and a system change debate ended”. For more see: Serap Gur, “Presidentialism: What it Holds for the Future of Turkey”, (PhD thesis, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2015), 37-38; The debate over the presidential system continued into the 2000s. Shortly after the arrival of the JDP as the only ruling party, time to time was voiced the idea for the change of system by individuals within the JDP, even though it was not foreseen anywhere in the party program. Within this context, the change of the political system from the parliamentary to the presidential one was proposed by Burhan Kuzu in January 2003. While in April 2003, the prime minister at the time Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, suggested an “American-style presidential system.” Consequently, Cemil Çiçek, the minister of Justice, also made statements supporting the presidential system during December 2004 and January 2005. Generally, it can be said that the propaganda on the presidential system by the JDP during the first years of their rule was limited and manifested only in rhetoric. From 2005 to 2010, debates over the presidential system are considered to have been limited. The leadership of JDP in some cases during these years has alluded that they support the idea of a presidential system but conditions are not suitable to change the political system right now. But, after the parliamentary elections of 2011 it can be said that JDP started to be more concrete regarding the idea for the change of system. Thus in November 2011, in the motion called “Executive Proposals” the Reconciliation Commission—formed by equal members from the political parliamentary parties headed by Cemil Çiçek, then president of parliament, were delegated to draft a civilian constitution. Among parties, only JDP proposed the presidential system, while opposition parties strongly opposed the proposal. The unsuccessful attempt of the JDP to have the necessary number of seats to change the constitution led also to the failure of the motion. Finally in the 2015 parliamentary elections, the JDP concentrated with a higher intensity on changing the system where in the election campaign, the introduction of the presidential system and increasing the executive powers of the president were widely discussed. In fact, the opposition political parties headed by Republican People's Party, claimed that the presidential system would turn the country into a dictatorship.. While Erdoğan stated that “half of the G20 countries are governed by the presidential system JDP emphasized that the argumentation for the

Palace has been transformed into the center of power. The decision-making in the foreign policy has been centralized in the hands of the president and in his close circle of trusted people such as Ibrahim Kalin, Special Adviser to the President, Hulusi Akar the Minister of National Defense, Hakan Fidan the Head of National Intelligence. The institutions of state that in the past were determinant in the foreign policy such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Armed Forces and the National Security Council, mostly have been bypassed and left in the shadows regarding the decision-making process.¹⁰¹² That is to say, the diminutive role of traditional institutions have open the path for rise of personalities, thus being a crucial factor in the foreign policy processes.¹⁰¹³

The new presidential system makes the President the central authority on foreign policy decision making. The aforementioned people and officially appointed advisors to the

legitimacy of the presidential system was to create a effective, pluralist and participative government model which comparing with the current parliamentary system established after the 1960 military coup produced very weak and not stable coalition governments. That's why, the best solution for this problem according to JDP is the presidential system because it represents an active and dynamic government that the current Turkey needs it. The path to the presidential system can be considered to have been opened by the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party Devlet Bahçeli, who at the first stages of this idea, especially during the electoral campaigns before the June 7, 2015, and November 1, 2015, general elections, harshly oposed it. But in the parliamentary group speech on October 11, 2016, Bahçeli surprised the whole Turkish society emphasizing that he would support a motion in the parliament for the change of political system and if the vote required a referendum, he would respect the decision of the Turkish nation. After this signal by Devlet Bahçeli, JDP's political lobbies were mobilized and talks started between the two political parties to propose a constitutional amendment. The chronology of the constitutional change took place in this context:

“On December 10, 2016, the motion was presented to the Turkish Grand National Assembly by the JDP parliamentary group with a total of 316 signatures.

- The motion was negotiated in the TGNA on December 12, 2016, and sent to the Constitutional Commission on December 20, 2016.

- The motion's 21 articles were reduced to 18 articles during the nine-day-long negotiations and the proposal was approved by the commission on December 30, 2016.

- Negotiations in the general assembly began on January 9, 2017.

- The second round of negotiations was completed on January 21, 2017.

- The president approved the constitutional amendment and the referendum process was initiated”. For more see: Battal Yilmaz, **The Presidential System in Turkey: Opportunities and Obstacles**, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 32-36; Turkey adopted presidential system after a referendum that was realized on April 16, 2017. The constitutional amendment package, consisted by, 18 constitutional changes, including a presidential system was approved through the referendum with nearly 52 percent of the votes. The presidential system was supposed to be phased in by November 2019, after the presidential and parliamentary elections. But the Turkish government decided to go in elections earlier, and the new system of governance entered into force after the elections of June 24, 2018. For more see: Saim Kurubas, “What Does the Presidential System Bring to Turkey?”, **TRT World**, 24.05.2018, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/what-does-the-presidential-system-bring-to-turkey--17682>, [25.12.2020].

¹⁰¹² Haugom, “Turkish foreign policy under Erdogan”, 214.

¹⁰¹³ Bulent Aras, “Turkish Foreign Policy after 15 July”, **Istanbul Policy Center**, (2017): 4.

President and other connections outside the Presidency (like the informal advisors) now have advisory roles. President Erdoğan decides on policy. According to a study of Chr. Michelsen Institute, the decisions taken within the Presidency are in a highly personalized fashion.¹⁰¹⁴

President Erdoğan intended to spread a message to the world that now he became the ultimate decision maker regarding Turkish foreign policy. One of his first steps was to strengthen diplomatic relations with countries that are in frequent contact and to develop new relations with the leaders of other countries mainly through presidential foreign visits and telephone diplomacy.¹⁰¹⁵

A concrete example of this cultivation of close relations is visible with almost all leaders in the Western Balkans region. Examples include: the most relevant Bosniak politicians in Bosnia, particularly the president of SDA, Bakir Izetbegović; the Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama; the president of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi; former-Prime Minister of Macedonia Nikola Gruevski; and Serbia's president Aleksandar Vučić. They have all established a personal relationship with Erdoğan. The goal of these leaders is to foster good relations with the current Turkish President, minimize institutional channels of communication in foreign policy, and intensify communication through personal relationships.¹⁰¹⁶

For example, to demonstrate the good relations with President Erdoğan, all these leaders attended the inauguration ceremony of the Turkish president in 2018. To contrast, almost all leaders of the Western community were not present that day. Heads of states and governments attended, as well as heads of international institutions, vice presidents, politicians, diplomats and many others. According to the Turkish presidential office, 22 heads of states, 6 prime ministers and parliament speakers were due to attend the

¹⁰¹⁴ Siri Neset, Hasret Dikici Bilgin, Metin Gürçan, Mustafa Aydın, Arne Strand, "Turkish Foreign Policy: Structures and Decision-Making processes", **Chr. Michelsen Institute Report**, No.3, May 2019, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/6854-turkish-foreign-policy-structures-and-decision-making-processes>.

¹⁰¹⁵ Aras, "The Crisis and Change", 7.

¹⁰¹⁶ Igor Novaković, Jovana Bogosavljević, Natan Albahari, "Analysis Post "zero problems with neighbours" in the Western Balkans A view from Serbia", Paper presented in the expert workshop "**Re-thinking Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans - Ruptures in the neighbourhood**" organized by HBS Belgrade, Istanbul, and Sarajevo offices, IFRI, ISAC fund and Al Sharq Forum, (Belgrade, 2019): 11.

ceremony. However, Balkan leaders and representatives were numerous among this number.¹⁰¹⁷ Balkan presences included the Bosniak member of Bosnia's three-member state presidency, Bakir Izetbegović, Bulgarian President Rumen Dadev, Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi, Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov, Moldovan President Igor Dodon, and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. Albania's Edi Rama was the only Prime Minister from a Balkan country at the ceremony.¹⁰¹⁸

Among these leaders, Bakir Izetbegović has even acted as a strong supporter of the JDP. In every possible occasion, Izetbegović praises Erdoğan, even calling him the leader and prime minister of the Bosniak nation. Izetbegović's SDA party has organized ceremonies to commemorate the anniversary of the 2016 coup, and even helped Erdoğan organize a rally in Sarajevo during the 2018 presidential election campaign. To contrast, Western European countries like Germany, the Netherlands or Austria banned Erdoğan from holding rallies in their countries with the Turkish community.¹⁰¹⁹

Across the border, in March 2019 Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić congratulated Erdoğan on the results of local elections, despite major breakthrough by the opposition in Istanbul and Ankara.¹⁰²⁰ Even Vučić's style of dress began to resemble with that of Turkish President Erdoğan- he has joined to the group of politicians who wear the Scots plaid jackets, now identified with Erdoğan.¹⁰²¹

Relatedly, Albanian Prime Minister Rama on several occasions called Erdoğan his brother in public statements, and complimented Erdoğan's foreign policy approach. He also criticized allegedly emerging Turkophobia and Islamophobia.¹⁰²² As a result of his

¹⁰¹⁷ "Balkan Leaders Flock to Erdogan Inauguration", **Balkan Insight**, 06.09.2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/07/09/balkan-leaders-flock-to-erdogan-inauguration-07-09-2018/>, [20.08.2020].

¹⁰¹⁸ **Ibid.**

¹⁰¹⁹ Novaković, Bogosavljević, Albahari "Analysis Post 'Zero Problems With Neighbours' ", 11.

¹⁰²⁰ **Ibid.**

¹⁰²¹ Büyük and Öztürk, "The Role of Leadership Networks", 123.

¹⁰²² "Rama:Erdogani, Vëllai Ynë në Ditë të Mira e të Vështira (Por Thacin e Quan Vetem Mik)", **Gazeta Tema**, 23.10.2013, <http://www.gazetatema.net/2013/10/23/lajm-i-fundit-rama-erdogani-miku-dhe-vellai-yne-ne-dite-te-mira-e-te-veshtira/>, [21.08.2020].

closeness to Erdoğan, Bakir Izetbegović and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama were among the guests of the wedding of Erdoğan's daughter in 2016.¹⁰²³

During the analysis of Turkey's struggle with FETÖ network in the Western Balkans region, it will be seen that in the countries where Erdoğan has cultivated close personal relations with these leaders, he has managed to achieve considerable successes by closing the institutions of this network in those countries, and also managed to extradite members of FETÖ to Turkey to be tried for participation in terrorist organizations and preparing for coup d'état.

In such structuring, it seems that the feature of Turkish foreign policy under President Erdoğan is the quest for strategic autonomy. It is being demonstrated by Ankara taking a step further to enter into intensive bilateral relations and flexible alliances with former adversaries, aiming to realize security and defense objectives even at the cost of deteriorating relations with Western allies.¹⁰²⁴ This means that Erdoğan is a fervent proponent of putting his 'country first' through the personalisation of politics. Simultaneously, he undermines institutions and multilateralism and their impacts on foreign and security policy. The issue here is not just achieving strategic autonomy. The approach is also changing: short term alliances may be the model of the future, while strategic and long term partnerships will be placed under ever greater stress. This is also related to the structural transformation of power that is very much related to the personalisation of politics. It is no longer a case of institutions with decades of experience shaping foreign policy, but rather the decisions of powerful individual leaders. Thus, foreign policy decisions have become increasingly personalised and strictly subject to domestic electoral considerations.¹⁰²⁵

Distant relations with the European Union and growing differences with the USA in several issues, presents a concrete factor contributing to Turkey's beginning a continuous search for strategic autonomy. Growing European opposition to Turkey's

¹⁰²³ "Edi Rama në Dasmën e Vajzës së Erdoganit", **Telegrafi**, 14.05.2016, <https://telegrafi.com/edi-rama-ne-dasmen-e-vajzes-se-erdoganit/>, [22.08.2020].

¹⁰²⁴ Haugom, "Turkish foreign policy under Erdogan", 217.

¹⁰²⁵ Ilke Toygür, "When Strongmen Personalise Foreign and Security Policy: the US and Turkey", 30.11.2018, <https://blog.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/when-strongmen-personalise-foreign-and-security-policy-the-us-and-turkey/>, [25.08.2020].

integration in the EU and the worsening relations with the USA¹⁰²⁶, mostly around the strategic issues particularly in the Middle East, further shifted the western dimension in Turkey's foreign policy.¹⁰²⁷ In a situation of weakening relations with its strategic partner (the USA) and moving away from the path to EU integration, Turkish leadership has lately paid significant attention and energy into improving relations with the global powers such as Russia and China. As a result of this approach, debates have intensified over whether Turkey should become part of the Eurasian Economic Union or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The more Turkey felt pushed aside by the western powers, the closer it came to non-western global powers.¹⁰²⁸

Another example can be taken from the alignment with Russia. Though possessing different objectives, both countries have moved to a type of strategic alliance. Among the key factors of this relationship is Putin's support to Erdoğan during and after coup attempt when Turkish government was criticized by the west for violating human rights, as well as Erdoğan's autocratic attitudes during the nearly two-year state of emergency.¹⁰²⁹ In fact, from 2013's Gezi Park protests, part of public opinion believed that some western countries have been trying to overthrow Erdoğan's government by giving support to opposition groups and destabilizing the economy of Turkey. This belief was strengthened even more when European states and USA provided refuge for accused suspects of 15 July Coup attempt. On the other hand, there are assumptions that Russia passed on information about the coup to Erdoğan in advance, an appreciated gesture.¹⁰³⁰ The relationship between the two countries "is characterized by being an elite-driven process mainly shaped by Erdoğan and Putin, meaning that it is not institutionalized".¹⁰³¹ This relation is described as a form of "strongman brotherhood"

¹⁰²⁶ As a result of the distanced and deterioration of relations with the USA, a survey done in 2018 by the Pew Research Center came out with results that 73% of Turks had a negative perception of the USA, with only 20% having a positive perception. The same survey also tells that only 11% of Turks had confidence in the current President of USA Donald Trump, while the rest, more exactly 84 % have no confidence. For more see: "Global Indicators Database", Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, [25.08.2020].

¹⁰²⁷ Oğuzlu, "Turkish Foreign Policy", 134.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid*, 136.

¹⁰²⁹ Oktay Bingöl, "Changing Balancing Behaviors in Turkish Foreign Policy During AKP Period (2002-2019)", *Journal of Gazi Academic View*, Vol. 13, No.25 (2019): 71.

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁰³¹ Siri Neset, Metin Gürcan, Hasret Dikici Bilgin, Mustafa Aydın, Arne Strand, "Turkey's International Relations", *Chr. Michelsen Institute Report*, No. 2 (2019), <https://www.cmi.no/publications/6853-turkey-international-relations>.

between the two, establishing a common front against western states that are critical of their domestic and foreign policies. The current Russian-Turkish relationship is characterized by high pragmatic dimensions where the main actors of this relations prioritize their self-interest, and as noted, both countries have a “mutual reactionist attitude towards the West, notably the EU and the USA”.¹⁰³²

According to Ömer Taşpinar, if current trends continue, the international Western community may witness the emergence of a more nationalist, self-confident, independent orientation of Turkey’s foreign policy – or as he name as a Turkish variant of “Gaullism”. As France did under Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s, Turkey may choose its own “Realpolitik” with countries such as Russia, China, Pakistan, Brasil, India etc.¹⁰³³

Taşpinar emphasizes that:

“Turkish Gaullism is primarily about rising Turkish self-confidence and independence vis-à-vis the West. In the long run, a Gaullist Turkey may decide to no longer pursue an elusive EU membership; it may even question its military alliance with the United States. Burdened by a sense that it never gets the respect it deserves, Turkey may increasingly act on its own in search of “full independence, full sovereignty,” strategic leverage and most importantly, “Turkish glory and grandeur”.¹⁰³⁴

In fact, this is not really a new attitude. From the 90's onwards, the country's aspirations to establish itself as a regional power with attempts for complete independence in the international system had already been expressed by other Turkish leaders. However, the first decade of the 21st century saw the dynamism of the economy backed by the country's G20 membership, as well as the appropriate environment conditions in the international system. These were determinant factors for Erdoğan to pursue a more active role for Turkey.¹⁰³⁵

In the past Western Community has rhetorically asked whether Turkey had any other geopolitical options, and with full confidence, seemingly assured themselves that it did

¹⁰³² **Ibid.**

¹⁰³³ Ömer Taşpinar, “The Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish-American Relations Right”, **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2011): 16.

¹⁰³⁴ **Ibid.**

¹⁰³⁵ Ioannis Moutsis, “La Política Exterior Turca en los Balcanes en la Era del AKP, ¿Hacia una Pax Ottomana?”, **Un Retrato de la Turquía Contemporánea. Visión General y Perspectivas**, ed. Federico Donelli, Alessia Chiriatti, Manuel Férrez, Universidad Anáhuac México Sur (2016): 164.

not. However, due to changing circumstances on the international stage, Taşpınar states that such options now seems to be more realistic. Many Turkish entrepreneurs already looking for economic opportunities in the Middle East, Balkans, India, Africa, Russia, China etc.¹⁰³⁶

Meanwhile, Fuat Keyman sees Erdoğan's foreign policy through the lens of so-called moral realism. According to him, “Proactive moral realism has begun to emerge as the main motto of Turkish foreign policy in the post-Davutoğlu era”.¹⁰³⁷ He understands moral realism as a “combination of the use of hard power that goes parallelly with priority setting, both of which compose the relevance of strategy and doing the right strategic choice to reach the intended goals”.¹⁰³⁸

As the current situation in international politics continues to be more crisis-ridden, as geopolitical "games" among world powers continue to dictate international politics, and interests instead of norms are defining state behavior, proactive moral realism seems to be the key determinant in shaping Turkey's foreign policy and her regional and global involvements. Keyman conceives “moral realism as a strategic choice” in order to fulfill three objectives in the same time: to maintain proactivism; to continue promoting humanitarian norms and moral responsibility; and to respond efficiently to security risks through the hard power tools.¹⁰³⁹

When compared to the period when Davutoğlu was in charge of foreign policy, there is a clear contrast in terms of priorities and approach. A strong focus on national security under president Erdoğan is in fully contrast with the the soft power policy that was characteristic for the Davutoğlu era. Turkey's foreign policy preferences under Davutoğlu were based on multilateralism, institutions and values rather than relations focused on transactions and interests. What President Erdoğan's foreign policy has in common with the period when Davutoglu was leading Turkish diplomacy, is to evolve from a regional mid-range power in international politics. However, the perception of Turkey as a regional factor, mediator, and model in a political context for the rest of

¹⁰³⁶ Taşpınar, “The Rise of Turkish Gaullism”, 17.

¹⁰³⁷ Keyman, “A New Turkish Foreign Policy”, 68.

¹⁰³⁸ **Ibid.**

¹⁰³⁹ **Ibid**, 56.

Muslim states has been moved into a narrowly defined national interests in the context of security.¹⁰⁴⁰

In sum, the post-Davutoğlu period marks a new momentum in Turkish foreign policy. This refers to changing the international order, as well as the changing domestic political circumstances in Turkey, imposing the need to take a new approach in the foreign policy. In the international system, most cases the primary priority has been national security - more exactly the fight against terrorism. In the case of Turkey, the above description enables us to conclude that there have been threats from both internal and external terrorist structures. Faced with this kind of challenge, Turkish leadership has felt the need to recompose its foreign policy and use other instruments to achieve its objectives. By minimizing its global activation with liberal elements, it focused on protecting national security, mainly through coercive means. Following this subchapter, the focus will be the analysis of one of Erdoğan's main priorities in the region, Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans, i.e. the struggle against FETÖ network.

4.2. Struggle with FETÖ Network in Western Balkans as a Top Priority of Erdoğan's Foreign Policy

Since the end of the Cold War to present, Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans has been characterized by its active approach and the cultivation of good bilateral relations with countries in the region. This approach was further strengthened and carried a higher degree by the JDP in terms of the intensity of cooperation in various fields, such as political, security, economic, cultural, scientific, etc.

Due to the departure of some important figures from the JDP party, the changes that Turkey has recently experienced – such as the change of the political system, the devaluation of the Turkish lira, and threats to internal and external national security -- Turkey has felt the need to change its course of action and respond to the latest threats.

It should be noted that Turkey continued to maintain its active access in the Western Balkans. In 2019 in Belgrade, after a 6-year break, the Trilateral Summit between the

¹⁰⁴⁰ Haugom, “Turkish Foreign Policy”, 215.

leaders of Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was reactivated.¹⁰⁴¹ During the summit, the heads of state talked about the implementation of joint projects, while special emphasis was placed on the Belgrade-Sarajevo highway as a capital project with long-term economic prospects.¹⁰⁴² The first section of the highway from Serbia between Sremska Rača-Kuzmin has been undertaken to construct by the Turkish company Tasyapi. While financing of the construction of this section is planned partly from a loan from Turkish banks, and partly from the budget of the Republic of Serbia.¹⁰⁴³ Whereas in the previous chapter we saw that the organizations supported by the Turkish state, continued their activities with the same dynamic. TIKa's assistance in various projects in the Western Balkans, even in recent years continued as before.¹⁰⁴⁴ Yunus Emre Cultural Centers are in a constantly active approach by offering Turkish language courses and carrying out cultural activities. While the Turkey Scholarship project within YTB continues to offer scholarships to international students, including students from Western Balkan countries.¹⁰⁴⁵ Recently, Turkey launched the MAARIF foundation in order to provide qualitative education as an alternative vis a vis FETÖ's educational institutions. The above-mentioned initiatives and activities suggest that Turkey's foreign policy, mainly through liberal means, had a continuity in terms of its presence and penetration in the Western Balkans. However, during this period, especially during the second decade of the 21st century, with the change of "environment" in the context of

¹⁰⁴¹ "President Erdoğan Attends Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia Trilateral Summit", **The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications**, 08.10.2019,

<https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/englisshaberler/detay/president-erdogan-attends-turkey-bosnia-and-herzegovina-serbia-trilateral-summit>, [22.08.2020].

¹⁰⁴² "Označen Početak Radova na Izgradnji Autoputa Beograd-Sarajevo", **N1**, 08.10.2019, <https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/a532812-oznacen-pocetak-radova-na-izgradnji-autoputa-beograd-sarajevo/>, [22.08.2020].

¹⁰⁴³ Samir Huseinović, "Turska Trasira Put ka EU Auto-Putem Sarajevo-Beograd", **Deutsche Welle**, 29.08.2019, <https://www.dw.com/sr/turska-trasira-put-ka-eu-auto-putem-sarajevo-beograd/a-50198716>, [23.08.2020].

¹⁰⁴⁴ For more see: "Turkish Development Assistance Report -2017", <https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2019/Turkish%20Development%20Assistance%20Report%202017/Kalkinma2017EngWeb.pdf>; "Turkish Development Assistance Report -2018", <https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/sayfa/publication/2018/TurkiyeKalkinma2018ENGWeb.pdf>; "Turkish Development Assistance Report -2019", <https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/sayfa/publication/2019/TurkiyeKalkinma2019WebENG.pdf>, [24.08.2020].

¹⁰⁴⁵ Regarding the Balkan region from 2012-2019, 3895 has been the total number of students (undergraduate, master and doctoral studies) who have won the scholarship of the Turkey Scholarship program. Information provided by YTB, exclusively for use in this doctoral thesis, [08.05.2020].

security, referring to external and internal threats to the internal stability of Turkey, the top priority of the Turkish leadership was already the issue of security, which indirectly was reflected also in the Balkan region. The first had to do with the wave of refugees fleeing the war in Syria, which posed a major challenge for Turkey, as it was the first country where refugees seek for refuge. According to UNCRH data, there are an estimated 3.6 million registered refugees in Turkey, along with around 320,000 persons from other nationalities, making Turkey the country with the largest number of refugees worldwide.¹⁰⁴⁶ This situation undoubtedly presented a problem in the context of security, as well as in the social and economic one. However, indirectly, it also presented a serious challenge for the Balkan region, bearing in mind that for refugees, this region was a transit route to go to European countries. It is estimated that from the beginning of 2015 until mid-2016 about 800,000 people from Turkey to Greece have transited by four Western Balkan countries, more concretely from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia arriving in Western European countries, mainly Germany, France, Scandinavian countries etc.¹⁰⁴⁷ These small countries from the Balkan region do not have enough capacity to manage the millions of refugees crossing their territory.¹⁰⁴⁸ In addition to the possible social and economic consequences for these Balkan countries, a potential threat to the security of this region was the infiltration of persons who were part of terrorist organizations operating in the Middle East. According to the information provided by Frontex and EUROPOL there is a potential risk that the Balkan migrant route might be used to make easier the movement of terrorists in both directions – east, to Syria, Jordan, Iraq and other Al-Qaeda and ISIS battlegrounds, and back to European countries, where terrorists dislocated by the ISIS territorial losses return to the possibly strike targets in their home countries. During this period the Balkan region was seen as the gateway for the terrorists leaving and entering Europe.¹⁰⁴⁹ The second problem in

¹⁰⁴⁶ “Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey”, **UNCHR**, <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey>, [27.06.2021].

¹⁰⁴⁷ Senada Šelo Šabic, “The Impact of the Refugee Crisis in the Balkans: A Drift Towards Security”, **Journal of Regional Security**, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2017): 51.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Visar Xhambazi, “Lëvizja e Erdoganit Mund të Shkaktojë një Krizë të re Refugjatësh”, **Reporter**, 17.03.2020, <https://www.reporter.al/levizja-e-erdoganit-mund-te-shkaktoje-nje-krize-te-re-refugjatesh/>, [29.06.2021].

¹⁰⁴⁹ Jessica Gerken, Tuesday Reitano, “The Balkans: A Migrant Gateway for Jihadists?”, **Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime**, 01.05.2018, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-balkans-a-migrant-gateway-for-jihadists/>, [01.07.2021].

this regard was that a significant number of people from the Balkans joined the terrorist organizations in the Middle East to fight in their battles. Based on information from some media and intelligence services, the Balkan region has become one of the regions that mostly recruits volunteer fighters to join ISIS cells.¹⁰⁵⁰ There is no exact number of people who have joined ISIS from the Balkans, but based on data from the Extremism Research Forum, from across the Western Balkans, more than 800 people have been part of this terrorist structure.¹⁰⁵¹ In this regard, there were claims that in Kosovo, Turkey through TİKA has financially supported radical Islamic groups which have been the basis for the recruitment of mostly young people in the wars of terrorist organizations such as ISIS in the Middle East. These allegations came from the media supported by FETÖ network, which targeted TİKA as the main protagonist supporting these radical Islamic groups in Kosovo.¹⁰⁵² These claims by the media of FETÖ, were categorically denied by senior Turkish state officials. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtumlus has said that the news about TİKA is a lie and slander.¹⁰⁵³ Meanwhile the President of Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) Serdar Çam categorically refused allegations by the media outlets of FETÖ, which accuse the TİKA of having links with ISIS in Kosovo. Çam stressed that Turkey is actively fighting all forms of terrorism and shares its anti-terrorism information with Kosovo and other states in the Balkan region.¹⁰⁵⁴ During August and September 2014, Kosovo police arrested more than 50 people on suspicion of taking part in the wars in Middle East, more exactly in Iraq and Syria alongside the terrorist organizations ISIS and Al-Nusra, as well as

¹⁰⁵⁰ Fatmir Mediu, "How to counter the ISIS threat in the Balkans", **European Leadership Network**, 16.03.2016, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/how-to-counter-the-isis-threat-in-the-balkans/>, [02.07.2021].

¹⁰⁵¹ Antigona Imeri, "Balkan Daesh Fighters in Numbers", **Politics Today**, 18.12.2019, <https://politicstoday.org/balkan-daesh-fighters-in-numbers/>, [02.07.2021].

¹⁰⁵² For more see: Emre Uslu, "Turkey's TİKA funding radical Islamists?", **Gagrule**, 25.09.2014, <https://gagrule.net/turkeys-tika-funding-radical-islamists/>, [04.07.2021].

¹⁰⁵³ "Zëvendëskryeministri turk thotë se agjencia TİKA që operon në Kosovë nuk ka lidhje me ISIS", **Bota Sot**, 27.09.2014, <https://www.botasot.info/lajme/329991/zevendeskryeministri-turk-thote-se-agjencia-tika-qe-operon-ne-kosove-nuk-ka-lidhje-me-isis/>, [03.07.2021].

¹⁰⁵⁴ "President of TİKA harshly refutes ISIS allegations", **Daily Sabah**, 10.01.2014, <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2014/10/01/president-of-tika-harshly-refutes-isis-allegations>, [04.07.2021].

other suspicions linked to religious radicalism.¹⁰⁵⁵ But, it is worth noting that after the agreement reached between Turkey and the European Union in March 2016 to prevent an even greater influx of Syrian refugees to Europe, it was reduced the use of the Balkan transit route by refugees, thus reducing the risk of getting out of control the situation. It should be emphasized that, this transitional route even today is still in use by refugees, but on a smaller scale.¹⁰⁵⁶ Apart from the refugee crisis, which posed a security threat to both Turkey and the Balkans, the second issue that was a top priority for the Turkish leadership, especially after 2016, was the fight against the FETÖ network, which in some way related with the region of Balkan. The structures of FETÖ's network in the Balkans have been present since the 1990s, and the claims of the Turkish leadership to clean up this structure in the Balkans posed a new challenge of Turkey's foreign policy.

In short, Turkey's active approach continued in the Western Balkans. However, as was noted, the period after 2016, was characterized by the struggle of the Turkish state against the FETÖ network,¹⁰⁵⁷ which was officially recognized by Turkey as a terrorist organization. In fact, the "declaration of war" by the Turkish authorities against FETÖ's

¹⁰⁵⁵ Bekim Shehu, "Në Kosovë Arrestohen edhe 15 Persona, Përfshirë edhe Imam të Xhamive", **Deutsche Welle**, 17.09.2014, <https://www.dw.com/sq/n%C3%AB-kosov%C3%AB-arrestohen-edhe-15-persona-p%C3%ABrfshir%C3%AB-edhe-imam-t%C3%AB-xhamive/a-17927953>, [05.07.2021].

¹⁰⁵⁶ For Turkey's agreement with the European Union in the context of the refugee crisis, see more in : <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>, [30.06.2021].

¹⁰⁵⁷ The Gülen movement called by her members and as FETÖ (Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation) by the Government of Turkey after 2015, is an "transnational Islamic movement" motivated by the writings and thoughts of Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish preacher who is living in the USA since his self exile in 1999. Due to the outlawed status of the Gülen movement in Turkey, people studying this issue refer to the members of this movement as a sub-sect of Sunni Islam. These members keep their religious principles as Turkish Sunni Islam. FETÖ also have members from other countries and religious affiliations. This structure has "attracted supporters and drawn the attention of critics in Turkey" as well as in the regions like Asia, Balkans, Europe and the other parts of the globe. The main area of its activism was education operating with private schools and universities almost in all over the world. Apart of this FETÖ has important investments in media, civil society, finance and so on. Despite its teachings which are considered conservative even in Turkey, Gülen and his followers claim that the movement have a pacifist and modern-oriented approach of Islam. But it has also been claimed that this movement have "global, apocalyptic ambition", a "cultish hierarchy" and of being a secretive Islamic sect. After the evidence was found regarding the attempt for coup d'etat, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan officially proclaimed FETÖ a terrorist organisation and its members or those connected to it as terrorists. For more see: "What is FETO?", **TRT WORLD**, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/what-is-feto--8654>; Kenneth Rapoza, "In Sunni 'Cult' Fight, Turkey Guns For America's Richest And Most Politically Connected Cleric", 20.12.2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2015/12/20/in-sunni-cult-fight-turkey-guns-for-americas-richest-and-most-politically-connected-cleric/#2b573e774f93>; "Most Turks Believe a Secretive Muslim Sect was Behind the Failed Coup", **The Economist**, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2016/07/28/most-turks-believe-a-secretive-muslim-sect-was-behind-the-failed-coup>, [23.08.2020]

network reflected the internal character that culminated with the coup attempt on July 15, 2016.

In the past, more exactly during the first decade of the 2000s, JDP's objectives in domestic politics can be said to have been intercrossed with that of FETÖ's network to some extent. The FETÖ network helped the JDP government to liberate the institutions of the state and the military from the Kemalists,¹⁰⁵⁸ who had lead the “deep state” within Turkey through the plots and orchestrated trials with fabricated evidence. Sure enough, this Kemalist “deep state structure” had defined the lines of what kind of political approach was acceptable, and overthrew civilian governments that failed to adhere to this approach. The Gülenists that were installed in important state structures together with the JDP were of the same mindset on removing this threat. However, in time, the Gülenists became another version of the “deep state” had previously been Kemalist in nature.¹⁰⁵⁹

As a result of these changing circumstances, the danger and threat from the Kemalists seemed to be completely neutralized, but their positions were already filled by FETÖ. For the leadership of JDP, this was a challenge, and this is considered to be the first open clashes of these structures, sometime in 2012.

Despite scoring one of the JDP's biggest victories with 49.8% of the vote in the parliamentary elections of 2011, Erdoğan's JDP faced several setbacks in its third consecutive government. One of FETÖ's first serious blows was the attempted arrest of MIT President Hakan Fidan. This was done by “FETÖ-linked prosecutors on February 7, 2012, over allegations of MIT's ties to the terrorist group PKK.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Fidan did not go

¹⁰⁵⁸ The part of the people in Turkey identified as Kemalists (also known as Atatürkism) are those who have accepted the political philosophy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the father of modern Turkey. Kemalism, was defined by sweeping juridical, political, religious, cultural and social changes aiming to separate the new Turkish modern state from the Ottoman Empire by accepting a western lifestyle and incorporating democracy, secularism and free education as well as other innovations with which Turkish society had to adapt. Eric J. Zürcher, Turkey, **A Modern History**, (New York: J.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004), 181.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Asli Aydintasbas, “The Good, the Bad, and the Gülenists: The Role of the Gülen Movement in Turkey's Coup Attempt”, **European Council on Foreign Relations**, (2016): 2.

¹⁰⁶⁰ “Day of Reckoning for FETÖ's 'First Coup Attempt' in Turkey”, **Daily Sabah**, 14.02.2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2020/02/14/day-of-reckoning-for-fetos-first-coup-attempt-in-turkey>, [20.08.2020].

to the court to testify, upon the instructions of then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.¹⁰⁶¹

A new indictment by prosecutors in Istanbul showed that the FETÖ network aimed to remove the head of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) through a sham investigation. Prosecutors charged 34 suspects including FETÖ leader Fetullah Gülen, the group's administrators for its infiltrators in the judiciary, former police chiefs and a journalist. They were charged with the effort to overthrow the government and running a terrorist group. What is now known as the "February 7 conspiracy against MIT," this was considered the group's first attempt to overthrow the government.¹⁰⁶²

Another blow to the JDP government was the 2013 Gezi Park protests, which were characterized by a wave of mass demonstrations in Turkey. They began on May 28, 2013, initially serving to oppose the urban development plan for Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul, and later to raise a several other concerns. Among the biggest concerns were the freedom of the press, human rights, expression etc. For the second time, JDP leadership accused the Gülen structure of attempting to overthrow the JDP government by supporting the protests. The perception of Gülen as a state enemy was thus cemented - an person who is trying to establish a "state within a state" or "parallel state."¹⁰⁶³

Other events that marked the clash between the JDP government and the Gülen network included the decision of the government to close the several private preparatory schools,¹⁰⁶⁴ many of which were owned by the Gülen Movement; the "17-25 December process",¹⁰⁶⁵ the plot of MIT trucks,¹⁰⁶⁶ and the culminating event of the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Around 10,000 soldiers initiated this coup attempt, "claiming to fight the

¹⁰⁶¹ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁶² **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁶³ Sertan Sanderson, "From Ally to Scapegoat: Fethullah Gulen, the Man Behind the Myth", **Deutsche Welle**, 06.04.2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/from-ally-to-scapegoat-fethullah-gulen-the-man-behind-the-myth/a-37055485>, [21.08.2020].

¹⁰⁶⁴ "Erdoğan: Dershaneler Konusunda Geri Adım Yok", **Radikal**, 20.11.2013, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/erdogan-dershaneler-konusunda-geri-adim-yok-1161982/>, [21.08.2020].

¹⁰⁶⁵ For more see: Aylin Sırıklı, Barış Kılıç, "17-25 Aralık'tan 15 Temmuz'a FETÖ", **Anadolu Ajans**, 14.07.2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/17-25-araliktan-15-temmuza-feto-/861258>, [22.08.2020].

¹⁰⁶⁶ For more see: "MIT Kumpası Talimatı Pensilvanya'dan", **Sabah**, 15.02.2020, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2020/02/15/mit-kumpasi-talimati-pensilvanyadan>, [22.08.2020].

lack of leadership amid the ongoing state of crisis in Turkey”.¹⁰⁶⁷ The attempt for coup d'etat was badly managed, thus failing within twelve hours. More than 250 people, including members of the security forces, policeman and civilians, died that night, and many of state buildings were damaged. The JDP government immediately blamed Gülen' movement, claiming that they were behind this failed coup.¹⁰⁶⁸ Part of the soldiers captured after the coup attempt allegedly admitted to have taken instructions from Gülen. Among them was Lieutenant Colonel Levent Turkkan, aide of Chief of Turkey's General Staff Hulusi Akar. He confessed that he have connection with the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), and saying that they have been the main orchestrators of the failed coup attempt. “I am a member of the parallel state, or FETÖ. I have served this community for years voluntarily. I have obeyed the orders and instructions of the big brothers exactly,” he confessed during questioning by the prosecutors.¹⁰⁶⁹

The process of cleansing the domestic political arena of FETÖ began immediately after the coup attempt. Persons associated with this structure in critical areas (such as security, justice, health and education) were removed from their positions; many were tried and found guilty. The most important among those expelled were from the Turkish Armed Forces. Military personnel who served in critical duties were removed from their posts and expelled from the army. Within the Ministry for Internal Affairs, thousands of police officers in charge of the police force and had relations with FETÖ were similarly expelled.¹⁰⁷⁰

Significant changes were also made in the security sector. The Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Commands joined the Ministry of Interior, while the Ministry of National Defense came out into the spotlight, changing the role of the Chief of General Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Forces. The first result of the cleansing of the security

¹⁰⁶⁷ Sanderson, “From Ally to Scapegoat”, [21.08.2020]

¹⁰⁶⁸ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁶⁹ Huseyin Gazi Kayki, Serdar Acil, “Turkish top commander Aide admits Gulen loyalty”, **Anadolu Agency**, 20.07.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/turkish-top-commander-aide-admits-gulen-loyalty/612043>, [22.08.2020].

¹⁰⁷⁰ Murat Yeşiltaş, “Analiza e Javës – 15 Korriku pas 4 vitesh”, **TRT**, 17.07.2020, <https://www.trt.net.tr/shqip/rubrikat-tematike/2020/07/17/analiza-e-javes-15-korriku-pas-4-vitesh-1456487>, [04.08.2020].

bureaucracy by FETÖ and the reform of the security sector was visible in the fight against terrorism.¹⁰⁷¹

In this context, to have full control of the army, in the new presidential system, to the MIT was granted the authorization to gather intelligence about the Turkish Armed Forces, as well as Ministry of National Defense personnel. Based to the latest change, MIT intelligence officer now have the right to do any kind of investigation into this two institutions mentioned above.¹⁰⁷² This in a way further strengthened MIT's position within the new presidential system, which was not the case before.¹⁰⁷³

In addition to internal dimensions, the battle of the Turkish state against the network of FETÖ had opened the horizons of action outside Turkey. The structure of FETÖ had a transcontinental operation and was present in almost all parts of the globe in various fields - with special emphasis on education and media. This posed an important challenge to Turkish leadership to minimize and possibly end the functioning of this network which claimed to overthrow the political government of Turkey through a coup d'etat. The end of FETÖ's activity became a main priorities for Turkish foreign policy in order to remove this security threat.

One of the regions where FETÖ had established a strong presence since the early 1990s was the Western Balkans. As mentioned previously, it was mostly active in fields such as education, media and publishing, and was most likely to have an impact on those who had received education in FETÖ schools.¹⁰⁷⁴

¹⁰⁷¹ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁷² Oya Armutçu, "New Turkish State of Emergency Decrees Ties Intelligence Agency to President", **Hürriyet**, 25.08.2017, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-turkish-state-of-emergency-decrees-ties-intelligence-agency-to-president--117194>, [05.08.2020].

¹⁰⁷³ "The MIT had not previously been authorized to gather intelligence about the Armed Forces and military staff until 1997. However, an assassination attempt targeting then Chief of General Staff Hüseyin Kivrikoğlu during a drill in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus revealed deficiencies about intelligence gathering within the military, prompting the change. On November 28, 2011 the MIT's intelligence gathering authorization inside the military were removed for a second time following a circular issued by the Chief of General Staff Necdet Özəl". For more see: Armutçu, "New Turkish State of Emergency", [05.08.2020].

¹⁰⁷⁴ "FETÖ Kercenon Paqen dhe Sigurinë Ndërkombëtare", **Shenja**, 22.01.2019, <https://shenja.tv/feto-kercenon-paqen-dhe-sigurine-nderkombetare/>, [24.08.2020].

Though Turkey had prioritized the use of soft power in the Western Balkan countries through a variety of activities, but after the coup attempt, in the bilateral relations with these countries were defined certain priorities, such as the fight against FETÖ and the closure of all its related institutions.

According to Ahmet Erdi Öztürk and Samim Akgönül, the transnational nature of the struggle against the Gülen Movement, particularly in the Western Balkans where the Gülenists were strong, increased the priorities of Ankara's diplomats. Öztürk and Akgönül stressed that under Erdoğan, Turkey used multilayered efforts and available transnational state apparatuses to cripple the Gülen Movement abroad.¹⁰⁷⁵

President Erdoğan confirmed Turkey's attempt against FETÖ network on several occasions. During the joint press conference during the Macedonian President's visit to Turkey, Erdoğan stressed that "I hope we will remove FETÖ from the Balkan geography with the support of our friends". According to Erdoğan, FETÖ posed a serious threat to Turkey and Macedonia, and Turkey was committed to pulling out the root of this organization everywhere.¹⁰⁷⁶

The report from the 2nd International Security Symposium of the Turkish National Police Academy stated that around 20.000 students in Balkan states received education in the schools under the management of FETÖ. The majority of these students are in Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Romania. In this report also is stressed that apart from educational activities, the structure of FETÖ aimed to reach its target audiences and open the doors for new members in non-governmental organizations. Around 33 NGOs in the Balkans are estimated to be under FETÖ's control.¹⁰⁷⁷

As mentioned above, FETÖ has had a Balkan presence since the 1990s, and the struggle with this structure in countries such as Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, presented and still presents a serious challenge for Turkey.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, Samim Akgönül, "Turkey: Forced Marriage or Marriage of Convenience with the Western Balkans?", ed. Florian Bieber, Nikolaos Tzifakis, **The Western Balkans in the World: Linkages and Relations with Non-Western Countries** (Taylor & Francis, 2019): 234.

¹⁰⁷⁶ "FETÖ'yü Balkan Coğrafyasından Cöküp Atacağız", **Time Balkan**, 20.02.2018, <https://timebalkan.com/fetoyu-balkan-cografyasindan-sokup-atacagiz/>, [27.08.2020].

¹⁰⁷⁷ Mehmet Şahin, Murat Tinas, Buğra Sarı, "FETÖ an International Threat", **Turkish National Police Academy Presidency Report**, No. 25 (2019): 55.

4.2.1. The Struggle with FETÖ Network in Macedonia

The presence of FETÖ network in Macedonia dates back to the 1990s. It has been most active in the education and media sector, but also in tourism, transport, trade, etc.

According to the Anadolu news agency, "Yahya Kemal" college in Skopje continues their activities with primary and secondary schools. In addition to Skopje, "Yahya Kemal" schools are present in other cities such as Tetovo, Gostivar, Struga and Strumica. Yahya Kemal college was been established in November 1996 in Skopje.¹⁰⁷⁸

In the media sector, this organization continues its activity in Macedonia through the weekly publication "Makedonya Zaman", founded in 1994.¹⁰⁷⁹

According to Anadolu Agency, other organizations and structures in cooperation with FETÖ's network are the "EVAR" market chain, "Basak" travel agency, "Rainbow" transport firms, and the Sedef Education Center, which organizes foreign language courses, college admissions and preparation courses for graduation exams. FETÖ's structure has activities as well in trade and business through the Macedonian Businessmen's Union (MIBA).¹⁰⁸⁰

Amongst NGOs, FETÖ operates in Macedonia through the foundations "Tolerans" and "Şafak", as well as through the association "Horizons". Through them, FETÖ manages student dormitories, both in Skopje and in other cities. Anadolu Agency also states that FETÖ in Macedonia has an analytical center entitled "analytic.org". This center is known as the nest of products of strategies and thoughts.¹⁰⁸¹

Since 2016, the Turkish leadership has systematically and actively requested from the Macedonian authorities to close all institutions related to FETÖ, and the extradition of Turkish citizens who are members of this network. This was publicly announced by the Turkish Ambassador to Macedonia Tulin Erkal Kara, during the first year anniversary of

¹⁰⁷⁸ "Структурирањето на ФЕТО на Балканот", **Anadolu Agency**, 28.07.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/mk/архива/-структурирањето-на-фето-на-балканот/617373>, [27.08.2020].

¹⁰⁷⁹ <https://www.zaman.mk/tr/>, [27.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸⁰ "İşte FETÖ'nün Makedonya yapılanması!", **Sabah**, 13.12.2017, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/12/13/iste-fetonun-makedonya-yapilanmasi>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸¹ "FETÖ'nün Batı Balkanlar'daki Yapılanması", **Anadolu Agency**, 28.07.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/fetonun-bati-balkanlardaki-yapilanmasi/617149>, [28.08.2020].

the failed coup. During her speech, Kara expressed her disappointment with the Macedonian authorities for not taking concrete actions against this structure.¹⁰⁸² Ambassador Kara said:

“I must state with regret that the schools, media and companies of this terrorist organization are still active in Macedonia. These organizations do not represent Turkey in any way. Aside from not representing Turkey, they continue their activities against Turkey, negatively affect the relations between Turkey and Macedonia and are waiting for an opportunity to poison the existing excellent relations between the two countries.”¹⁰⁸³

Turkish ambassador also reminded that the previous government (VMRO-DPMNE) had decided to suspend the activities of companies related to FETÖ, but no concrete actions has been taken so far. Kara said that one of Turkey's basic criteria for relations with other countries would be the attitude of those countries in the fight against FETÖ, and in this regard Turkish expectations from Macedonia are high.¹⁰⁸⁴

Ambassador Kara in the fight against FETO's had gone to such radical instances that during the opening of the MAARIF foundation, she appealed to parents to enroll their children in MAARIF schools, if in the future they do not want their children to become terrorists, referring to the fact that the institution named "Yahya Kemal" in no way represent Turkey.¹⁰⁸⁵ This statement, made the parents of the children who are enrolled in the schools of "Yahya Kemal" felt desperate and indignant at the vocabulary used by the ambassador, calling their children as "potential terrorists".¹⁰⁸⁶

The position of the Macedonian Ministry of Education has been that Yahya Kemal College meets all legal requirements for the development of the teaching process and

¹⁰⁸² “Вицепремиерот Ангџушев и Министерот Таравари на Скопското Одбележување на Годишнината на Неуспешниот Пуч во Турција”, **SDK**, 16.07.2017, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/vitsepremierot-angushev-ministerot-taravari-na-skopskoto-odbelezuvane-na-godishninata-na-neuspeshniot-puch-vo-turtsija/>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸³ “Турската Амбасадата Очекува Владата да се Справи со Организациите на Ѓулен”, **Sitel**, 15.07.2017, <https://sitel.com.mk/turskata-ambasadata-ochekuva-vladata-da-se-spravi-so-organizaciiite-na-gjulen>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸⁴ **Ibid.**

¹⁰⁸⁵ Siniša Stanković, “Турската Амбасадорка Обвини Училиште за Тероризам”, **Voa News**, 10.05.2018, <https://mk.voanews.com/a/macedonia-jahja-kemal/4388190.html>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Ambasadorja Turke në Maqedoni Nxënësit e “Yahya Kemal” i Quan Terroristë Potencial (Video)”, **Telegrafi**, 08.05.2018, <https://telegrafi.com/ambasadorja-turke-ne-maqedoni-nxenesit-e-yahya-kemal-quan-terroriste-potencial-video/>, [28.08.2020].

that there is no legal basis to close this institution. The spokesperson of this college, Surija Tauk, stated that they do not expect a decision for the closure of this school. He emphasized that an informal meeting was held between the school leaders and the Ministry of Education and Science, and that they were encouraged to continue working. However, in case a decision is made to close the college, then the college is ready for a judicial epilogue.¹⁰⁸⁷

In general, the government led by VMRO-DPMNE until April 2017 did not have a firm position on what will be decided for the fate of this school that operates in 6 cities in Macedonia, as well as for other institutions related to FETÖ. Meanwhile, government coalition partner DUI has made it clear that the school will not be closed.¹⁰⁸⁸

It should be emphasized that as a result of the failure of the Skopje authorities to take any concrete actions towards the closure of institutions run by FETÖ network, Turkey decided to repeal the agreement between the Republic of Turkey and Republic of Macedonia on the recognition of high school diplomas and undergraduate, master and doctoral diploma.

This decision to repeal the agreement was adopted at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on December 12, 2016,¹⁰⁸⁹ and signed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and published in the Official Gazette of Turkey.¹⁰⁹⁰ This decision never entered into force but was applied only to some universities that, according to the Turkish Council of Higher Education, had seen abuses and were educationally inadequate. These were the

¹⁰⁸⁷ “~~“Lutfiu: Kolegji “Jahja Kemal” Nuk do të Mbyllet~~”, **Alsat-M**, 30.08.2016, <https://alsat-m.tv/268212/>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸⁸ “VMRO-DPMNE dhe BDI në Hall me “Jahja Kemal“-in”, **Info Shqip**, 31.08.2016, <https://www.infoshqip.com/vmro-dpmne-dhe-bdi-ne-hall-jahja-kemal/>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁸⁹ The Agreement signed on July 6, 1998 in Skopje, between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Macedonia, No. 98/11600, which entered into force on July 12, 1998, regarding the recognition of diplomas for secondary education, higher education, masters and doctorates, as of February 11, 2017, is repealed. Based on the case with protocol number 11494949, dated 22 November 2016, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and according to Law 244, Article 3, dated 31 May 1963, this decision was adopted at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 12 December 2016. “Türkiye, Makedonya'yla Diploma Denklik Anlaşmasını Feshetti”, **Dünya Bülteni**, 21.01.2017, <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/dis-politika/turkiye-makedonya-yla-diploma-denklik-anlasmasini-feshetti-h391636.html>, [29.08.2020].

¹⁰⁹⁰ “Турција Нема да ги Признава Македонските Дипломи!”, **Civil Media**, 21.01.2017, <https://civilmedia.mk/turzia-nma-da-gi-priznava-makdonskit-diplomi/>, [28.08.2020].

International University of Struga and the European University in Skopje, as well as a university in Bosnia.¹⁰⁹¹

Even the new government of Macedonia established in May 2017 (headed by SDSM), were reserved and lacked a firm stance regarding the issue of closing the Yahya Kemal college. The spokesperson of the Macedonian government said that government daily receives various types of official messages and requests from a number of countries with which Macedonia have built bilateral and friendly relations. The official stance of the Macedonian government is that the solutions will be exclusively within the legal regulations of the Republic of Macedonia.¹⁰⁹²

But the change of political circumstances also imposes recomposing of state attitudes. Given that the SDSM government strongly focused on resolving the dispute over the name with Greece and Macedonia's integration into the North Atlantic structures, it was aware that during this process Turkey's support was a sine qua non condition. One of the steps taken by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev was the declarative acceptance of FETÖ as a terrorist organization, although officially the state of Macedonia does not recognize FETÖ as such. At the jubilee celebration of the Day of Turkish Language Teaching in the Republic of Macedonia, Prime Minister Zaev stated that the Republic of Macedonia supports the Republic of Turkey in the fight against the terrorist organization FETÖ.¹⁰⁹³

According to the political analyst Arsim Zekolli, the issue of FETÖ's presence in the country is a factor that can put Macedonia in a complicated position if it is used as a "exam" and concrete evidence of the Macedonian sincere commitment in the fight

¹⁰⁹¹ "Turqia Nuk i Nostrifikon Diplomat e UNS-së", **Alsati-M**, 16.06.2018, <https://alsat-m.tv/turqia-nuk-i-nostrifikon-diplomat-e-uns-se/>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁹² "На Барањето на Турција за Затворање на Фирмите на Ѓулен Владата ќе Одговори Според Македонските Закони", **Vesti 24**, 17.07.2017, <https://vesti24.mk/na-bara%D1%9Aeto-na-turtsi%D1%98a-za-zatvora%D1%9Ae-na-firmite-na-%D1%93u.len-vladata-%D1%9Ce-odgovori-spered-makedonskite-zakoni/>, [28.08.2020].

¹⁰⁹³ "Премиерот Заев на Јубилејната Прослава на Денот на Наставата на Турскиот Јазик во Република Македонија: Историјата Спои Држави и Народи, Турската Заедница е Конструктивен Дел од Нашето Општество", 21.12.2017, <https://vlada.mk/node/13906?ln=sq>, [29.08.2020].

against terrorism. Moreover, Zekolli says that Turkey was among the biggest contributor in strengthening of Macedonian security forces - army and police.¹⁰⁹⁴

Macedonian diplomacy in this period was intense, focusing on resolving the name dispute with Greece and opening the country's Euro-Atlantic perspectives. Eventually the Greek-Macedonian dispute was resolved after 30-some years with the Prespa agreement, signed on February 12, 2019.¹⁰⁹⁵

Following this agreement, the doors of NATO integration for Macedonia were opened immediately; Greece no longer posed any obstacles to this process. At “NATO Headquarters in Brussels on 6 February 2019, the Permanent Representatives to NATO of the all members of the Alliance signed the Accession Protocol in order to admit Republic of Macedonia in NATO”.¹⁰⁹⁶ Following this step, the accession protocol must be signed by the 29 NATO member states in accordance with national procedures. The candidate country becomes a full member of the alliance after the member states have ratified the Accession Protocol.¹⁰⁹⁷

While the problem with Greece was overcome, the fear that the Macedonian leadership was now facing was the doubt whether Turkey would ratify the membership protocol, due to their non compliance with Turkey's demands to close FETÖ institutions extradition requests. In certain instances, Turkey played this card. This was best illustrated during the visits of senior state leaders such as Defense Minister Hulusi Akar.

During his visit to Macedonia on 03.04.2019, Defense Minister Akar held meetings with the state leadership, and one of his priority talks was the fight against the network of FETÖ. During the press conference with his counterpart, Akar stressed that:

“I believe that in the coming period concrete steps will be taken in order for both countries to escape from this terrorist organization because it is damaging the relations between our two countries, sabotaging our friendship and the fraternal relations we have. We have the names of some personalities, whose names have been given to the institutions of both countries. I am

¹⁰⁹⁴ Arsim Zekoli, “Студена Војна за Жешката Северна”, **Deutsche Welle**, 04.04.2019, <https://www.dw.com/mk/студена-војна-за-жешката-северна/a->, [29.08.2020].

¹⁰⁹⁵ More details about the Prespa Agreement can be found at the following link <https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/spogodba-en.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹⁶ NATO Allies Sign Accession Protocol for the Future Republic of North Macedonia”, **NATO**, 06.02.2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_163078.htm, [29.08.2020].

¹⁰⁹⁷ **Ibid.**

deeply convinced that in the coming days, the institutions in Macedonia will take concrete measures because I trust the institutions of this the country.”¹⁰⁹⁸

Although Akar emphasized the traditional close relationship between Turkey and Macedonia, some Macedonian media perceived the statement as a form of blackmail, taking into account that Turkey has not yet ratified Macedonia's NATO accession protocol.¹⁰⁹⁹

This was somehow confirmed by an interview conducted with the Minister of Defense Radmila Šekerinska on a Macedonian national television Alsat-M, after the meeting she had with her counterpart Hulusi Akar. Šekerinska acknowledged that the Turkish government's request to fight FETÖ could affect the ratification of Macedonia's Accession Protocol to NATO membership. She also stated that there was no meeting where the issue of FETÖ was not raised, and at all those meetings Macedonian representatives said that condemn violence, in particular, violence aimed at provoking certain political moves. From that aspect, Macedonian government condemned all such moves. She added that Macedonian authorities will discuss these topics, but respecting the laws. Šekerinska said the emphasis is on individuals they consider to be related to the organization, without giving further details.¹¹⁰⁰

This visit of the Turkish Minister of Defense can be said to have been triggered as a result of the approach of the Macedonian authorities towards the problem, but also as a result of the issue of subsidizing the daily newspaper Zaman, a newspaper considered to be owned by FETÖ network.

In January 2019, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia published a list of print media to which it provides financial support. The government's support was given to 11 print media publications, including the "Zaman Makedonija" newspaper, which is linked

¹⁰⁹⁸ Admir Fazlagic, “Akar në Shkup: Dëshirojmë që Maqedonia e Veriut të Forcojë Lidhjet me NATO'n”, **Anadolu Agency**, 03.04.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkani/akar-n%C3%AB-shkup-d%C3%ABshirojm%C3%AB-q%C3%AB-maqedonia-e-veriut-t%C3%AB-forcoj%C3%AB-lidhjet-me-nato-n/1441374>, [29.08.2020].

¹⁰⁹⁹ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “North Macedonia Weighs Turkish Demand to Extradite Suspects”, **Balkan Insight**, 10.04.2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/04/10/north-macedonia-weighs-turkish-demand-to-extradite-suspects/>, [29.08.2020].

¹¹⁰⁰ “Шекеринска: Акција кон ФЕТО би им Влијаела на Турските Власти за Ратификација на Протоколот за НАТО”, **360 Stepeni**, 06.09.2019, <https://360stepeni.mk/shekerinska-aktsija-kon-feto-bi-im-vlija/>, [29.08.2020].

to the FETÖ network. "Zaman Macedonia" received about 15 thousand euros in subsidies from the government of Zoran Zaev.¹¹⁰¹

The Turkish Embassy in Skopje reacted expressly to this decision, emphasizing that:

“We consider the decision of the Government of Macedonia to grant financial support to a FETÖ newspaper to be scandalous and unacceptable. We expect that the Government of Macedonia will reconsider its decision and take into account the long-standing friendly relations between the two countries and the two peoples.”¹¹⁰²

Additionally, Ambassador Kara met with the Minister without portfolio in charge of communications, accountability and transparency, Robert Popovski, regarding this matter. The ambassador shared photos from the meeting on her Facebook profile, at which she said that Turkey will certainly not accept such a decision of the Macedonian government.¹¹⁰³

As a result of this situation, a protest was organized near the Turkish Embassy in Skopje. Those present included Turkish Ambassador Tulin Erkal Kara, the Minister without portfolio in the Macedonian Government, Elvin Hasan, the chairman of the Turkish Movement Party (THP) in Macedonia (simultaneously serving as a member of the Macedonian Parliament), Enes Ibrahim. Also present were the chairman of the Turkish Democratic Party of Macedonia (TDP), Beycan Ilyas, the chairman of the Turkish National Unity Movement (TMBH) Erdoğan Saraç, chairman of the United Party for Roma Emancipation (OPER) Nexhdet Mustafa, the chairman of the Democratic Union of Bosniaks, Munir Kolashinac, as well as representatives of Turkish institutions in the country and many citizens.¹¹⁰⁴ During the protest, demonstrators chanted slogans in

¹¹⁰¹ “Владата на Заев Финансира Весник Поврзан со Терористичката Организација ФЕТО, Одговорна за Неуспешниот Обид за Државен Удар во Турција”, **Kurir**, 30.01.2019, <https://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/vladata-na-zaev-finansira-vesnik-povrzan-so-teroristichkata-organizacija-feto-odgovorna-za-neuspeshniot-obid-za-drzaven-udar-vo-turcija/>, [29.08.2020].

¹¹⁰² “Турската Амбасада Реагираше за Субвенции Доделени од Македонската Влада на Весник Близок до Гулен”, **Faktor**, 30.01.2019, <https://faktor.mk/turskata-ambasada-reagirape-za-subvencii-dodeleni-od-makedonskata-vlada-na-vesnik-blizok-do-gjulen>, [29.08.2020].

¹¹⁰³ “Амбасадорката на Турција на Средба со Роберт Поповски Поради Подршката за ‘Земан’”, **24 Info**, 29.01.2019, <https://24info.mk/амбасадорката-на-турција-на-средба-со>, [29.08.2020].

¹¹⁰⁴ Furkan Abdula, “Shkup, Protestë Kundër Mbështetjes së Qeverisë së Maqedonisë për Gazetën e FETO-s”, **Anadolu Agency**, 30.01.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/shkup-protest/sq/balkan/shkup-protestë-kundër-mbështetjes-së-qeverisë-së-maqedonisë-për-gazetën-e-feto-s>, [30.8.2020].

support of Turkey, such as "FETÖ, withdraw your hands from Macedonia" and "Do not support terror".

Considering the harsh reactions from the Turkish embassy and from the political parties and civil sector of the Turkish community in Macedonia, the representatives of the Zaman newspaper informed the public that they have withdrawn accepting this subsidy by the government.¹¹⁰⁵

Despite issues of this nature, Turkey did not decide to block Macedonia's integration into NATO, and on 11.07.2019 the Turkish Parliament ratified the protocol for country's membership in NATO.¹¹⁰⁶ An eventual blockade of Turkey towards Macedonia's NATO integration would present a great despair for the Macedonian authorities, despite all the efforts made to integrate into this alliance. But on the other hand, it would be also a contradiction for Turkish politics if it blocked Macedonia's integration into the North Atlantic structures given that Turkey has been the strongest advocate for the integration of the Western Balkan countries. On the other hand, Macedonia's membership in NATO for Turkey means having a country that is considered a traditional friend, and for any issue within the alliance, there would be mutual support between the two countries.

Despite the attempts by Turkey to close completely the activities of the FETÖ structure in Macedonia have been unsuccessful. However, the dynamics of their activities has significantly weakened. The daily "Zaman Makedonija" decided to close its print publication as a result of financial difficulties, popular disinterest, and Turkey's active war. The statement published on the website of the FETÖ newspaper states that: "The newspaper printed version in Turkish and the magazine printed in Albanian in the coming days would be the last, while its publications will continue on online news portals and social media."¹¹⁰⁷

¹¹⁰⁵ "ЗАМАН Македонија се Откажува од Владината Субвенција", **Kanal 5**, 30.01.2019, <https://kanal5.com.mk/zaman-makedonija-se-otkazhuva-od-vladinata-subvencija/a364406>, [30.08.2020].

¹¹⁰⁶ "Турција го Ратификуваше Протоколот на Членство во НАТО", **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 11.07.2020, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/30050309.html>, [30.08.2020].

¹¹⁰⁷ Adnan İdriz, Dzihat Aliju, "Mbyllet Gazeta e FETO-s Zaman në Maqedoninë e Veriut", **Anadolu Agency**, 23.02.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/mbyllet-gazeta-e-feto-s-zaman-n%C3%AB-maqedonin%C3%AB-e-veriut/1400518>, [30.08.2020].

Also, the Yahya Kemal College promotional banner in Macedonia Square in Skopje, was removed at the initiative of Halkbank Skopje. The Maarif Foundation¹¹⁰⁸ of Turkey and Halkbank assumed the position of the banner. It is also noted that this college, which is facing financial problems, has transferred the general directorate to its other buildings.¹¹⁰⁹

As an additional measure, the Turkish embassy in Skopje informed the Macedonian authorities that people associated with FETÖ would not be able to enter Turkey as easily as before. In its statement, the embassy emphasized that: "Macedonia, a friendly and brotherly country, unfortunately has not yet given the expected support to Turkey in the fight against terrorist organizations." The statement also stressed that people from Macedonia who still work for terrorist organizations and institutions or those who still support them will no longer enter Turkey as easily as they did before.¹¹¹⁰

4.2.2. The Struggle with FETÖ Network in Albania

Albania is one of the countries where FETÖ's network is perhaps most influential in the region. In Albania, education and media have been the two most powerful sectors where FETÖ has had a presence, not excluding civil society, tourism, business, etc. In the

¹¹⁰⁸ The Maarif Foundation with its colleges is considered to be the alternative that will replace FETÖ in the education sector. Turkish Maarif Foundation represent "an gateway to international educational arena of Turkey that will support to boost the cultural and civilizational interaction and opening the way for reaching the common well being". Maarif Foundation which was founded by the enacted law on June 17th 2016 by the Turkish Parliament. TMF is the only entity that is authorized by state to offer educational services outside Turkey. In Macedonia, Turkish Maarif Foundation started its educational activities in 2018-2019 educational term in the Maarif International Schools in Tetovo, providing education in preschool, primary school and high school. It is worth noting that the current building of Maarif International Schools in Tetovo was owned by Woodrow Wilson School, which was later bought by TMF. The campus has an indoor area of 12.500 square meters and there are a dormitory having 140-person capacity, conference hall, library, computer, chemistry, biology, physics laboratories, indoor sports facility and so on. For more see: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/page/50-turkish-maarif-foundation-12>; <https://turkiyemaarif.org/post/7-macedonia-maarif-school-has-been-opened-422?lang=en>, [01.10.2020].

¹¹⁰⁹ Xhihad Aliu, Kayhan Gül, "Lufta Kundër FETO-s Vazhdon edhe në Ballkan", **Anadolu Agency**, 13.07.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkan/lufta-kund%C3%ABr-feto-s-vazhdon-edhe-n%C3%AB-ballkan/1202963?fbclid=IwAR3tmMYKDiPyzJ37zANHPNVBaxzwfaqqVzGAU30uxzfotqUtrh4xmIkeN> A, [30.08.2020].

¹¹¹⁰ Husamedin Gina, "Лицата Поврзани со ФЕТО од Северна Македонија Нема да Може да Влегуваат во Турција", **Anadolu Agency**, 13.11.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/mk/balkan/-лицата-поврзани-со-фето-од-северна-македонија-нема-да-може-да-влегуваат-во-турција/1644335>, [01.10.2020].

historical context, its activities in Albania began in 1993 with the opening of the Gülistan Foundation, known for its closeness to the ideology of FETÖ's structure.¹¹¹¹

According to Anadolu Agency sources, FETÖ's network since the 1990's has provided private education through colleges such as "Mehmet Akif" in Tirana, "Hasan Riza Pasha" in Shkodra, "Turgut Özal" in Durres, and Memorial International School Tirana "(MIST) in Tirana. With the educational service to the children of the upper class and politicians of the country, FETÖ has been able to bring them under its influence. Regarding higher education, FETÖ manages two universities in Albania, "Epoka" and "Bedër". These universities are some of the main sources of the FETÖ network, where in addition to local and foreign students, young people from Turkey also pursue higher studies. As in other countries, FETÖ has opened a foreign language course center in Tirana called "Meridian". There is also a kindergarten, one of the most expensive in all of Albania.¹¹¹²

Through the "Sema" Foundation, FETÖ has extended its influence even more in education. FETÖ has received from the Muslim Community of Albania (MCA) the madrasas of Kavaja, Korça, Berat, Elbasan and Tirana, which it administers itself. This structure through madrasas has created another source of profit by setting fees for these religious schools, which were once free. Another strategy that FETÖ has used within the MCA has been the placement of students who have been educated in Turkey in this institution.¹¹¹³

According to Anadolu Agency, in civil society the network of FETÖ has opened a cultural organization called "New Horizons", which is active in many areas: finding work for its members, arranging marriage between members of this organization, and gatherings for the purpose of new memberships. This organization is also responsible for collecting payments for the sacrificial aid from members it has hired or is ideologically affiliated with. After arranging members in different jobs, the organization takes from

¹¹¹¹ "Strukturimi dhe Ndikimi i FETÖ's në Ballkanin Perëndimor", **TRT**, <https://www.trt.net.tr/shqip/ballkani/2016/07/28/strukturimi-dhe-ndikimi-i-feto-ne-ballkanin-perendimor-539798>, [01.09.2020].

¹¹¹² "FETÖ' nün Batı Balkanlar'daki yapılanması", **Anadolu Ajans**, 28.07.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/fetonun-bati-balkanlardaki-yapilanmasi/617149>, [01.09.2020].

¹¹¹³ **Ibid.**

them payments in various forms, which are another source of profit for this organization.¹¹¹⁴

The tourism sector is another area where this structure generates fat profits. In Albania, the operations for tourist visits were realized by an agency called "Venus", but this company was closed and the organization then started working with different trusted people. In the trade and business sector, the Albanian Chamber of International Trade and Development (ACITAD) FETÖ receives profits from many companies, which come for business in Albania.¹¹¹⁵

Another scope of FETÖ in Albania is that of the media. "Gazeta Start", one of the first online and largest of its kind in Albania, was one of the main media of this organization in Albania. Following the events of December 17-25 in Turkey, this newspaper began to spread propaganda against the Turkish state. However, FETÖ closed this newspaper for reasons still unknown and after its closure, it exerts their media influence through elements infiltrated in other newspapers in the country. Amongst other articles with religious content, the newspaper "Drita Islame", which is affiliated with the Muslim Community of Albania occasionally advertises and propagates FETÖ.¹¹¹⁶

In terms of publications, FETÖ publishes books translated into Albanian through the publishing house "Prizmi". In this way, "Prizmi" has taken over the weight of the publications of this network. They also have a page entitled "fgulen.com/al" which has writings of Fethullah Gülen in Albanian. His weekly lectures are also published on this page.¹¹¹⁷

Even in Albania, Turkish leadership has fought against FETÖ network, namely the closure of all institutions under FETÖ and the deportation of Turkish citizens associated with it. During the official visit to Albania on 19.10.2018, the Turkish Foreign Minister

¹¹¹⁴ **Ibid.**

¹¹¹⁵ **Ibid.**

¹¹¹⁶ **Ibid.**

¹¹¹⁷ **Ibid.**

Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu reiterated Turkey's request for the closure of 'Gülenist' schools in Albania¹¹¹⁸ and the banning of the FETÖ structure.¹¹¹⁹

In the joint press conference with his Albanian counterpart, Ditmir Bushati, Çavuşoğlu stressed that Albania has shown an example of strong solidarity with Turkey after the coup attempt, while adding that in Albania there is a serious presence of FETÖ and this organization poses a great threat to the Albanian state. The Turkish Foreign Minister emphasized that FETÖ members are in Albania and Turkey awaits their extradition from friendly Albania. "We have given them the list of persons we have officially requested. We have requested them in official written form". The Turkish Minister also stressed that Turkey has compiled a list of FETÖ activities against Turkey and this list has in any case been handed over to friendly countries, from which, as he said, they expect solidarity in the fight against FETÖ.¹¹²⁰

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania Ditmir Bushati emphasized that the response of the Albanian state is the answer given to both Turkey and the international community. Albania was one of the first countries to show solidarity with Turkey after the coup. On the other hand, Albania is a NATO member country and an EU candidate country. It has

¹¹¹⁸ The demands for the closure of institutions and the expulsion of FETÖ people from Albania date back to 2015. During an official visit of Turkish President Erdogan to Tirana, he described the Gülen movement as terrorist and on his return to Ankara, on the presidential plane, Erdogan stated in front of the journalists that President Bujar Nishani and Prime Minister Edi Rama have had a positive approach regarding his request for expulsion of the educational activities of the Gülen movement, operating in Albania. However, such kind of requests by Erdogan wasn't remained without reaction. The most vocal in this issue was the Albanian deputy Ben Blushi who strongly criticized Erdogan's request for the departure from Albania of the supporters of Fethullah Gülen, the Erdogan opponents in Turkey. According to Blushi, the Gülenists have set up a large network of schools and media in several countries, including Albania, which are considered to be among the best. He said that "It seemed that the Turkish President in exchange for the Namazgja mosque seeks as a "gift" the closure of an organization, according to him terrorist. I have not seen a terrorist organization that does not kill. It is inadmissible as a request. We do not accept that we are a Turkish colony. It is about closing some schools in Tirana. They are schools, which were the pride of the Turkish education system and have helped hundreds of thousands of Albanians," said Blushi. For more see: "Erdogan: Gylenistet ne Shqiperi do Debohen", **City News Albania**, 16.05.2015, <https://www.cna.al/2015/05/16/erdogan-gylenistet-ne-shqiperi-do-debohen/>; "Blushi kundër Erdogan për 'Gylenistet': S'jemi Koloni e Turqisë", **Bota Sot**, <https://www.botasot.info/shqiperia/404729/blushi-kunder-erdogan-per-gylenistet-s-jemi-koloni-e-turqise/>, [01.09.2020].

¹¹¹⁹ "Turqia Pret nga Shqipëria Ekstradimin e Anëtarëve të FETO-s", **TRT**, 19.10.2018, <https://www.trt.net.tr/shqip/ballkani/2018/10/19/turqia-pret-nga-shqiperia-ekstradimin-e-anetareve-te-feto-s-1071994>, [01.09.2020].

¹¹²⁰ "Ministri i Jashtëm Turk në Tiranë: 'Gylenistet' Kontrollon Sistemin Arsimor, i Keni edhe në Strukturën Shtetërore", **Shqiptarja**, 19.10.2018, <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/ministri-i-jashtem-turk-ne-tirane-gylenistet-kontrollojne-sistemin-arsimor-dhe-shendetesor-eliminoni-veprimtarine-e-feto?r=kh7>, [01.09.2020].

acceded to some important international documents regarding extradition, and any such policy is pursued diplomatically and not in press conferences.¹¹²¹

After the Foreign Minister's trip, Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs Süleyman Soylu paid an official visit to Tirana, where he was received by the Albanian delegation led by Edi Rama. In the meeting between the two delegations, was discussed the issue of FETÖ's network in Albania. According to local media, in this meeting they discussed the fight against organized crime and migration issues.¹¹²² Edi Rama admitted that the Minister of the Interior's visit to Tirana was primarily about the problem of the Gülenists persecuted by Erdoğan.¹¹²³

In an interview for Anadolu Agency, the Albanian Prime Minister stressed that FETÖ schools in the past have provided opportunities that Albania has never had before, but that the Albanian government is committed and that the "negative influence of these schools" will not affect education in Albania. According to the Prime Minister Rama:

"It is very important to understand that we are committed to provide the best possible educational service throughout the territory and at the same time definitely not to allow negative influences to have space and undermine the very mission of education in Albania."¹¹²⁴

Asked further about the cooperation and efforts between Albania and Turkey to eliminate the FETÖ threat, Rama, referring to the failed FETÖ state coup in Turkey, said that that event makes them vigilant and very attentive as national security and the democratic stability of the country is a priority of priorities. "We are very attentive. We have all the reasons to remain very firm in the position expressed in the first minutes of the coup that it was a question of serious threat, that we would not want in any way and in any form", he stressed.¹¹²⁵

The current situation regarding FETÖ gives a dose of optimism to Turkish leadership that it has achieved considerable success in the fight against this structure in Albania.

¹¹²¹ **Ibid.**

¹¹²² "Rama Takon Ministrin Turk, Diskutojnë për Anëtarët e Lëvizjes Gylen", **Alsat-M**, 26.07.2019, <https://alsat-m.tv/rama-takon-ministrin-turk-diskutojne-per-anetaret-e-levizjes-gylen/>, [01.09.2020].

¹¹²³ "Rama e Pranon, Ministri i Brendshëm Turk Kërkoj Gylenistët", **Alsat-M**, 30.07.2019, <https://alsat-m.tv/rama-e-pranon-ministri-i-brendshem-turk-kerkoi-gylenistet/>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹²⁴ "Kryeministri i Republikës së Shqipërisë, Edi Rama, Intervistë Ekskluzive për Anadolu Agency", <http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/turkey/en/node/360>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹²⁵ **Ibid.**

The first has to do with the extradition of a member of FETÖ, Harun Çelik, a Turkish citizen who was a teacher in Albania. According to the Albanian media, he was deported from Albania on January 1, 2020 and was caught in an operation involving the Turkish secret service, MIT.¹¹²⁶ State police spokesman Gentian Mullaj informed the media that Harun Çelik was convicted and on January 1, 2020 he was released from prison and the procedures for his deportation from Albania have started. He was caught with false documents at the exit in Rinas airport and was convicted for that. According to the law on foreigners, legal procedures were followed in his leaving Albania. According to media sources, this Turkish citizen was detained in Rinas 5 months ago, trying to travel with a fake Canadian passport.¹¹²⁷

On January 3, 2020, Turkish court imposed detention measures for Harun Çelik. He was arrested as part of an investigation by the Istanbul Public Prosecutor's Office and transferred to a court at the request of the Chief Prosecutor at the end of the proceedings within the Istanbul Police.¹¹²⁸

There have been reactions from various parties against this decision. Democratic Party MP Rudina Hajdari commented on this extradition as a political act in violation of human rights. The MP explained that extradition of a Turkish teacher without a court decision endangers his life and violates human rights. She called on the institutions to take measures for the regular development of the legal process.¹¹²⁹

Eurodeputy Ramona Strugariu also reacted immediately by criticizing the Albanian government through a status on Twitter, saying that :

“The Prime Minister of Albania Edi Ramahas signed the Council of Europe Convention on Extradition. Moreover, you say that Albania is ready for the EU. Then please respect Article 19,

¹¹²⁶ Besar Likmeta, “Anadolu: Mësuesi Gulenist u Kap nga Shërbimi Sekret Turk në Tiranë”, **Reporter**, 02.01.2020, <https://www.reporter.al/anadolu-mesuesi-gulenist-u-kap-nga-sherbimi-sekret-turk-ne-tirane/>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹²⁷ “Shqipëria Ekstradon në Turqi Mësuesin Turk, Harun Çelik”, **Epoka e Re**, 02.01.2020, <https://www.epokaere.com/shqiperia-ekstradon-ne-turqi-mesuesin-turk-harun-celik/>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹²⁸ “Turqi, Paraburgim për të Dyshuarin e FETO-s të Deportuar nga Shqipëria”, **Anadolu Agency**, 03.01.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/turqia/turqi-paraburgim-p%C3%ABr-t%C3%AB-dyshuarin-e-feto-s-t%C3%AB-deportuar-nga-shqip%C3%ABria/1691661>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹²⁹ “Deportimi i ‘Gylenistit’ në Turqi, Rudina Hajdari: Të Ndalohen Aktet Politike, në Ekstradimin e Harun Çelik ka Shkelje”, **Front Online**, 03.01.2020, <https://frontonline.net/deportimi-i-gylenistit-ne-turqi-rudina-hajdari-te-ndalohen-aktet-politike-ne-ekstradimin-e-harun-celik-ka-shkelje/>, [02.09.2020].

point 2 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and do not extradite #HarunCelik to Turkey!.”¹¹³⁰

Turkey’s second moment of success in the fight against FETÖ structures in Albania was the decision taken by the Council of Ministers of Albania to close the madrasa "Hafiz Abdullah Zëmbllaku" in Korça (opened in 2002), The madrasa “Ali Korça” in Kavaja (opened in 1996) and “Memorial International School of Tirana (MIST)” at all levels of education which was managed by "Turgut Ozal Education Company" and were under FETÖ network.¹¹³¹ The proposal accepted by the minister the responsible for education, sports and youth on September 23, 2020 regarding the aforementioned educational institutions’ closures have been published on the official website of the Council of Ministers of Albania.¹¹³²

According to the decisions taken, the closed educational institutions have the obligation to provide each student with the necessary school documentation, which will serve for his transfer to another institution of pre-university education. They also must return the payments made by the students for the unfinished part of schooling as well as any other unfulfilled obligations they may have to students. Also, the closed institutions have the obligation to make available any required information to local educational institutions responsible for pre-university education, until all needs are fulfilled and relevant institutions closed.¹¹³³

Albanian media also reported that the FETÖ-linked company “Turgut Özal Education” is being investigated for the criminal offense of money laundering and that the case has been referred to the Tirana Prosecutor's Office. According to some, the police have exercised control over the premises of the company which administers several educational institutions, and some of the officials of this private educational institution

¹¹³⁰ “Dilema Rreth Debimit te Shtetasit Turk nga Shqiperia: Pse iu Refuzua Azili Politik ne Tirane?”, **KDP**, 03.01.2020, <https://kdpolitik.com/2020/01/03/dilema-rreth-debimit-te-shtetasit-turk-nga-shqiperia-pse-iu-refuzua-azili-politik-ne-tirane/>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹³¹ “Kryeministri Rama Mbyll Shkollat Gyleniste në Shqipëri”, **Anadolu Agency**, 25.09.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/p%C3%ABrp%C3%ABlitjet-e-fundit-t%C3%AB-feto-s-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-/821184>, [02.09.2020].

¹¹³² **Ibid.**

¹¹³³ “Këshilli i Ministrave i Shqipërisë Mbyll Disa Institucione Arsimore të FETO-s”, **Anadolu Agency**, 25.09.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/p%C3%ABrp%C3%ABlitjet-e-fundit-t%C3%AB-feto-s-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-/821184>, [02.09.2020].

have been interrogated. It is reported that the police have suspicions that the company does not legally justify the purchase of some real estate in Albania. It is also noted that all documentation of this company has been verified by tax institutions in the country.¹¹³⁴ According to local media, this investigation started after the transfer of the value of 10 million dollars of the sale of shares of "Turgut Özal", a transaction under investigation. Additionally, it is stated that 2 Turkish citizens sought for questioning have not been found in Tirana after leaving 3 months ago.¹¹³⁵

As additional measures against this structure in Albania, Turkey plans to counter these gaps left by educational institutions through the Maarif Foundation, which has opened schools in Albania.¹¹³⁶

4.2.3. The Struggle with FETÖ Network in Montenegro

Compared to other Western Balkan countries, FETÖ network are less influential in Montenegro. According to the Anadolu agency, there is a language course in the capital Podgorica, and a small dormitory house in the Muslim-majority town of Rozaje. Though it seems the FETÖ organization has attempted to infiltrate the Islamic Community of Montenegro, but it has failed to achieve this goal due to a timely and wise intervention of the people in charge.¹¹³⁷

In an interview for Anadolu Agency on the fourth anniversary of the failed coup attempt, Turkish ambassador to Montenegro Songül Ozan stressed that Montenegro and all its institutions, Turkish related communities and Islamic community, has supported Turkey. "I thank the Government of Montenegro and all institutions that did not give space to the FETÖ network to enter the territory of this country. We believe that Montenegro is a

¹¹³⁴ "Turqit e Shitën Tre Vite më Parë/ Institucioni Arsimor "Turgut Ozal Education" nën Hetim për Pastrim Parash", **Balkan Web**, 07.11.2020, <https://www.balkanweb.com/turqit-e-shiten-tre-vite-me-pare-institucioni-arsimor-turgut-ozal-education-nen-hetim-per-pastrim-parash/>, [10.11.2020].

¹¹³⁵ "Shitën Shkollën për 10 mln Dollarë, Prokuroria Nis Hetimet për Kolegjin "Turgut Ozal", **Shqiptarja**, 07.11.2020, <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/dyshime-per-pastrim-parash-prokuroria-nis-hetimet-per-shkollen-turgut-ozal?r=dttr>, [10.11.2020].

¹¹³⁶ "Përpëlitjet e Fundit të FETO-s në Shqipëri", **Anadolu Agency**, 18.05.2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/p%C3%ABrp%C3%ABlitjet-e-fundit-t%C3%AB-feto-s-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-/821184>, [03.09.2020].

¹¹³⁷ "Структурирањето на ФЕТО", [27.08.2020].

true example of friends and allies and in this fight we are convinced that we will have its support,” declared Ozan.¹¹³⁸

Since the declaration of independence of Montenegro, Turkey has cultivated excellent relations in many fields: diplomatic, economic, cultural, educational, etc. Turkey and Montenegro signed an agreement on Consular Assistance to Montenegrin Citizens, which includes Turkish diplomatic missions providing consular services to Montenegrin citizens in around 25 countries where Montenegro does not have diplomatic missions.¹¹³⁹

Turkish Ambassador Ozan emphasized that according to data from 2018, Turkish investors were the fifth largest investors in Montenegro. Several large Turkish companies operate in Montenegro, including Toscelik, Port of Adria, Sancakli, Ziraat Bank and Turkish Airlines. The Ambassador also stressed that Turkish investments in Montenegro in the past decade amount to about 165 million euros. Turkey and Montenegro also increased trade by about 50 per cent in 2019. Due to its economic size the export ratio is in favor of Turkey, but in July 2019 the free trade agreement was revised. By applying that revision, Montenegrins will be able to export more to Turkey, Ozan said.¹¹⁴⁰ The Turkish ambassador also said that under the auspices of the embassy in Podgorica, a Turkish-Montenegrin business platform was established, which gathers interested investors and offers them help.¹¹⁴¹

Turkey, amongst other Western Balkan countries, is also a strong supporter of Montenegro in the European integration process. Given that FETÖ network are not

¹¹³⁸ Kemal Zorlak, “Ambasadorica Turske u Crnoj Gori Ozan: Nastavljamo Odlučnu Borbu Protiv FETO-a Koji je Prijetnja za Sve Zemlje Svijeta”, **Anadolu Agency**, 14.07.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/ambasadorica-turske-u-crnoj-gori-ozan-nastavljamodlu%C4%8Dnu-borbu-protiv-feto-a-koji-je-prijetnja-za-sve-zemlje-svijeta/1909592>, [03.09.2020].

¹¹³⁹ “Turska Zastupa Crnu Goru u 25 Država”, **CDM**, 16.03.2020, <https://m.cdm.me/politika/turska-zastupa-crnu-goru-u-25-drzava/>, [03.09.2020].

¹¹⁴⁰ “Ambasadorica Ozan: Turska Podržava Ulazak Balkanskih Zemalja u EU, Uskoro Posjeta Erdogana Crnoj Gori”, **TRT**, 14.02.2020, <https://www.trt.net.tr/bosanski/region/2020/02/14/ambasadorica-ozan-turska-podrzava-ulazak-balkanskih-zemalja-u-eu-uskoro-posjeta-erdogana-crnoj-gori-1359661>, [03.09.2020].

¹¹⁴¹ **Ibid.**

present in Montenegro as in other countries, Turkey's diplomatic offensive did not come to the fore in this country.

4.2.4. The Struggle with FETÖ Network in Serbia

In the last few years, bilateral relations between Turkey and Serbia have reached the highest level they have ever been due to the “strategic partnership” objective. The frequent visits between the leaders of both countries is a proof of the positive. Despite the fact that these two countries have no common border, they consider each other as neighbours.¹¹⁴²

One of the last visits of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Serbia was in 2019 on the occasion of the 140th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Turkey and Serbia.¹¹⁴³

In an interview given to the Serbian newspaper Politika Erdoğan stated that: “Serbia has a central and strategic position in the Balkans. Turkey has deep-rooted, historical, and cultural ties with Serbia.”¹¹⁴⁴ Erdoğan evaluates the current relations as excellent, and according to him, one of the main contributors to these good relations is Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić.¹¹⁴⁵

Referring to all areas of cooperation between the two countries as successful and progressive, the Turkish president placed special emphasis on the field of economy. During this visit, Erdoğan stressed that due to the excellent partnership with Serbian president they have motivated Turkish businessmen to invest in Serbia. Erdoğan emphasized that: “Turkish investments in Serbia have increased from \$1 million in 2011 to \$200 million in 2018”, thus created space for job opportunities for approximately

¹¹⁴² “Relations between Turkey and Serbia”, **Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-serbia.en.mfa#:~:text=Relations%20between%20Turkey%20and%20Serbia%20have%20reached%20the%20highest%20level,consider%20each%20other%20as%20neighbours.,> [03.09.2020].

¹¹⁴³ “Erdoğan Zavrşio Posetu Srbiji, Vučić ga Ispratio”, **RTS**, 08.10.2019, <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/3690123/erdogan-zavrsio-posetu-srbiji-vucic-ga-ispratio.html>, [03.09.2020].

¹¹⁴⁴ “Turkey's Relationship with Serbia at its Best Level, Erdoğan Says”, **Daily Sabah**, 07.10.2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2019/10/07/turkeys-relationship-with-serbia-at-its-best-level-erdogan-says>, [04.09.2020].

¹¹⁴⁵ **Ibid.**

8,000 people in Serbia in different sectors such as banking, machinery, tourism, textile and so on. Erdoğan also stressed that, “The number of Turkish companies working in Serbia was around 130 in 2015, and it has already exceeded 800.”¹¹⁴⁶

In a joint press conference, Serbian President Vučić said that Serbian experts have shown an interest in buying some equipment and weapons from Turkey, and already want to collaborate in technology. According to Vučić, the increased cooperation with Turkey will benefit both countries economically and will raise Serbian defence capacity.¹¹⁴⁷

Regarding the presence of FETÖ in the state of Serbia, it should be noted that even here the level of presence of this structure is not high. According to Anadolu Agency, there is the elementary school "Bejza" in Čukarica, "Bejza educational center" in the center of Belgrade, while in Novi Sad there is a center for language and culture that also provides boarding services. In Novi Pazar, FETÖ has the associations “Most” and “Horizont”.¹¹⁴⁸ According to unofficial information, the primary school Bejza was closed on May 4, 2018 by the fire inspectorate due to irregularities in the school in terms of safety in case of fire. The closing of the school was confirmed by the Ambassador of Serbia to Turkey, Zoran Marković. He emphasized that this school did not meet Serbian regulations and that Serbia did not act on political request. “Frankly speaking, this school did not have the necessary environment to act as a school”, said Marković. However, it is worth mentioning that neither Serbian nor Turkish media, has stated the concrete reasons for the closure of this school.¹¹⁴⁹

¹¹⁴⁶ Kayhan Gul, “Turkey-Serbia Herald a New Era in Relations”, **Anadolu Agency**, 09.10.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/turkey-serbia-herald-a-new-era-in-relations/1607301>, [04.09.2020].

¹¹⁴⁷ Maja Zivanovic, Hamdi Firat Buyuk, “Serbia and Turkey Pledge to Boost Defence Cooperation”, **Balkan Insight**, 07.10.2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/07/serbia-and-turkey-pledge-to-boost-defence-cooperation/>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁴⁸ Kristina Maslarevic, Talha Öztürk, “Ambassador Bozay: Informisao Sam Srbijanske Vlasti o Terorističkoj Organizaciji FETÖ’u Srbiji”, **Anadolu Agency**, 08.09.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/ambasador-bozay-informisao-sam-srbijanske-vlasti-o-teroristi%C4%8Dkoj-organizaciji-feto-u-srbiji/625306>, [04.09.2020].

¹¹⁴⁹ Vakkas Dogantekin, “Cooperation with Turkey Serbia's National Policy: Envoy”, **Anadolu Agency**, 22.09.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/cooperation-with-turkey-serbias-national-policy-envoy/1398182>, [04.09.2020].

According to local media, after the attempted coup, both the population and the local self-government of Novi Pazar have stood by the Turkish government as an institution legal elected by their people. The local self-government of Novi Pazar does not provide any institutional, logistical or any other type of support to the work of NGOs related to FETÖ.¹¹⁵⁰ According to unofficial information, the associations "Most" and "Horizont" from 2017 has also ceased activities.

In December 2017, Serbia extradited Cevdet Ayaz to Turkey. Ayaz was wanted by the Turkish authorities for disruption of the constitutional order. He was the former provincial president of Muş and also a member of Kurdistan Freedom Party. Ayaz stayed in Serbia during the period of 2017 and requested asylum in Serbia. But, before his extradition to Turkey, he was detained for 30 days. The extradition decision was authorized by Justice Minister Nela Kuburović.¹¹⁵¹ It should be mentioned that Serbian appeals courts have overruled earlier district court decisions according to which Ayaz had to be extradited three times. After the fourth attempt in mid-December of 2017, the decision was finally approved.¹¹⁵²

According to international media, by this decision, Serbia ignored the continuous instructions of the United Nations Committee Against Torture. This committee had instructed the Serbian state not to allow this person to be extradited to Turkey before the proceedings finished.¹¹⁵³ Regarding this issue, justice minister Kuburović stressed that the recommendation by the UN Committee Against Torture had arrived after the extradition decision had been made, and voiced her conviction that Serbia would not suffer any consequences.¹¹⁵⁴ According to Kuburović:

¹¹⁵⁰ "Grad Novi Pazar Upozorava: Pazite se Gulena i Njegovih Organizacija", **Sandzak Press**, 26.07.2016, <https://sandzakpress.net/grad-novi-pazar-upozorava-pazite-se-gulena-i-njegovih-organizacija/>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁵¹ "Türkiye'ye İade Edildi", **Milliyet**, 28.12.2017, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/turkiye-ye-iade-edildi-2580915>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁵² Nemanja Rujevic, "Serbia Extradites Kurdish Politician Cevdet Ayaz to Turkey Despite UN Warning", **Deutsche Welle**, 27.12.2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/serbia-extradites-kurdish-politician-cevdet-ayaz-to-turkey-despite-un-warning/a-41950875>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁵³ "Serbia Extradites Kurdish activist to Turkey Despite U.N. Warning", **Reuters**, 26.12.2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-turkey-activist-idUSKBN1EK0YC>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁵⁴ "Kurdish man Extradited to Turkey Despite UN Recommendation", **B92**, 27.12.2017, https://www.b92.net/eng/news/society.php?yyyy=2017&mm=12&dd=27&nav_id=103126, [05.09.2020].

“Serbia has done everything that is in accordance with legal possibilities, checked whether there were conditions for the extradition whether there were any obstacles to implementing the decision. The Ministry of Justice does not have knowledge of what happens further to a person; that is under the jurisdiction of Interpol”.¹¹⁵⁵

She also added that the procedure had been carried out based on a bilateral contract with Turkey. Answering journalists' questions, Kuburović also denied that the decision was political.¹¹⁵⁶

As it was pointed out, the recent period of Turkish-Serbian relations marks the most positive relations in diplomatic history. This is as a result of the interests of both countries to deepen cooperation in many areas. Also, in this regard has influenced the positivity of personal relations between presidents Erdoğan and Vučić. Throughout the meetings, the words "friendship", "friendly country" or "my dear friend" were present.¹¹⁵⁷

In addition to reflecting on the close friendship between the two presidents, certain scholars draw parallel similarities between them in a political context. According to Büyük and Öztürk, both leaders participate in demonizing opponents and critical media and present them as tools of external influences to overthrow their leadership. They also use popular, nationalist and sometimes religious discourse to establish connections within the state, undertake mega construction projects, and aligning towards Russia politically.¹¹⁵⁸

As for Turkey's support in the fight against terrorism and especially against FETÖ, Serbian leadership not hesitated to give open support to Turkey. During the visit of Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić to Turkey regarding the opening of the honorary Serbian consulate in Edirne, Dačić stressed that regarding the issue of FETÖ, the position of Serbia is clear and concise. In Serbia, this structure had one school, and it

¹¹⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁵⁶ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁵⁷ “Moj Prijatelj je Dao Najprikladniji Odgovor’ Erdogan Upitan za Stav Turske o Kim, Ali je Vučić Uzeo Reč”, **Srbija Danas**, <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/kosovo/moj-prijatelj-je-dao-najprikladniji-odgovor-erdogan-o-pitanju-kim-2019-10-07>; “Turkey & Serbia friends and partners”, **N1**, <http://rs.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a385846/Turkey-s-Erdo%C4%9Fan-says-Serbia-good-friend-and-key-regional-player.html> [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁵⁸ Büyük and Öztürk, “The Role of Leadership Networks “, 123.

was closed. Compared to other countries, Serbia had its position open and sincere, which means that it is in the same line with Turkey in the fight against FETÖ's structures.¹¹⁵⁹

At the event "Salcano Turkey-Serbia Friendship Bicycle Race", Serbian Minister for Internal Affairs Nebojša Stefanović commemorated those martyred in the July 15 failed coup attempt, and stressed that Serbia continued to support Turkey's fight against terrorism as it did from beginning. He said that: "We want to fight against all forms of terrorism and organized crime with Turkey. Cooperation between the two countries has been reflected in all areas with the initiatives of the two countries' presidents, Aleksandar Vucić and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan".¹¹⁶⁰

Words of gratitude for this approach of Serbia were not absent from the Turkish leadership. During his visit to Serbia in 2018, President Erdoğan thanked Serbia and President Vučić for their support in the fight against terrorism, especially the fight against FETÖ and the PKK.¹¹⁶¹ Also during his meeting in Serbia with Interior Minister Nebojša Stefanović and Undersecretary Dejana Hrkaloović, Deputy Interior Minister Muhterem İnce stressed that Serbia is giving big support in the fight against terrorism. This is especially evident in the fight against FETÖ, ISIS, PYD / YPG. According to İnce, Serbia is ready to provide any form of support in this regard. While in the case of FETÖ, İnce emphasizes that Serbia should be an example for European countries in terms of its approach against this network.¹¹⁶²

This approach of both countries in the fight against terror materialized with the signing an Agreement between the Governments of the two countries on security cooperation in October 2019. The agreement was signed by Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of

¹¹⁵⁹ "Sırbistan'dan FETÖ ile Mücadelede Türkiye'ye Destek!", **Sabah**, 05.08.2019, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2019/08/05/sirbistan-dan-feto-ile-mucadelede-turkiyeye-destek>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁶⁰ Talha Öztürk, "Serbia Supports Turkey Against FETO: Interior Minister", **Anadolu Agency**, 14.07.2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/serbia-supports-turkey-against-feto-interior-minister/1531490>, [05.09.2020].

¹¹⁶¹ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Sırbistan'ın FETÖ ile Mücadelede Destegini Unutmak Mümkün Değil", **Takvim**, 07.05.2018, <https://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2018/05/07/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-sirbistanin-feto-ile-mucadelede-destegini-unutmak-mumkun-degil>, [06.09.2020].

¹¹⁶² "Sırbistan, Fetö Kurumlarının Kapatılması Konusunda Örnek Uygulamalar Yapıyor", **Haberler**, 17.04.2019, <https://www.haberler.com/sirbistan-feto-kurumlarinin-kapatilmasi-konusunda-11961629-haberi/>, [06.09.2020].

Serbia and the Minister of the Interior, Nebojsa Stefanović and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavusoğlu.¹¹⁶³ Stefanović signed also a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Defense of Turkey, Hulusi Akar, on the implementation of joint police patrols.¹¹⁶⁴

The agreement on security cooperation envisions improving relations in the fight against transnational crime, especially against crimes related to terrorism, organized crime, smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and narcotics. It is also envisaged that the police of Serbia and Turkey will cooperate in preventing and suppressing terrorist acts and financing terrorism.¹¹⁶⁵

The memorandum regulates the implementation of joint patrols of the Serbian and Turkish police during the tourist season. It is envisaged that visiting police officers will not carry weapons and means of coercion, but only uniforms. Their task is to assist the police officers of the host country in protecting public order and security, illegal border crossings, as well as in preventing the smuggling of migrants. The goal is for these police officers to facilitate the contact of their compatriots with the police authorities of the host country, as well as with the diplomatic and consular authorities of their country.¹¹⁶⁶ These documents, which strengthen the cooperation between Turkey and Serbia, were signed as part of the official visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Serbia in October 2019.¹¹⁶⁷

These agreements raised concerns amongst rights activists especially in Serbia, because now it will be easier for Belgrade to deport members of the Gülenists and other persons wanted by Turkey for extradition.¹¹⁶⁸ According to Nikola Kovačević, a teaching

¹¹⁶³ “Više Sporazuma o Saradnji Srbije i Turske”, **RTS**, 07.10.2019, <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/3688520/vise-sporazuma-o-saradnji-srbije-i-turske.html>, [06.09.2020].

¹¹⁶⁴ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁶⁵ “Правни Оквир за Сарадњу Србије и Турске у Области Безбедности”, 07.10.2019, <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/416712>, [06.09.2020].

¹¹⁶⁶ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁶⁷ “Vučić sa Erdoganom: Kad Dve Države Imaju Dobre Odnose, Onda ‘Uvek Imamo Mir’”, **Danas**, <https://www.danas.rs/politika/vucic-sa-erdoganom-kad-dve-drzave-imaju-dobre-odnose-onda-uvek-imamo-mir/>, [06.09.2020].

¹¹⁶⁸ “Turkey-Serbia Security Deal May Lead to Extradition of Gülenists – Report”, **Ahval**, 29.11.2019, <https://ahvalnews.com/serbia-turkey/turkey-serbia-security-deal-may-lead-extradition-gulenists-report>, [06.09.2020].

associate at the Law Faculty of Union University in Belgrade and expert on refugee and migrant rights, the Security Cooperation Agreement without doubt contains provisions that give cause for concern. Kovačević also said that given the way Turkey's penal code defines terrorism so broadly so as to include political dissenters, the agreement could form the basis for their persecution on the territory of Serbia.¹¹⁶⁹

4.2.5. The Struggle with FETÖ Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Within the Western Balkans region, Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially Bosnian community, has a special importance for Turkey in the kinship, cultural or historical context. This importance came to the fore particularly during the early 1990s when Turkey was trying to make the maximum contribution in all forms to stop the war in Bosnia. From this period onwards, the Turkish presence in BiH became more and more pronounced. During the governance of the JDP, the Turkish presence was manifested in the diplomatic, cultural, economic fields, as well as in the fields of education, media and civil society. In the past, more specifically during the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, part of the activities within these areas were carried out by the Turkish state itself, while the other part were carried out by certain structures like the civil sector which had support and an open road from the state. In this context, even in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the FETÖ network was present in some sectors such as education, media, tourism, etc.

After the coup attempt, the Turkish struggle against FETÖ was evident in Bosnia as well. As in other countries, the initial goal of the Turkish state was to identify the institutions of this structure operating in BiH. According to the Anadolu Agency, although they deny their affiliation with FETÖ, the Sema Educational Institution in BiH and its schools have conducted educational activities throughout the country since 1998. The institution, which is known to be close to the FETÖ network, administers 4 preschools, 5 primary schools, 5 secondary schools and 1 university in Bosnia and

¹¹⁶⁹ Maja Zivanovic, "Serbia-Turkey Security Agreement Alarms Rights Activists", **Balkan Insight**, 28.11.2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/28/serbia-turkey-security-agreement-alarms-rights-activists/>, [06.09.2020].

Herzegovina.¹¹⁷⁰ In addition to Sarajevo, the organization has its own schools in Bihac, Mostar, Zenica and Tuzla. Burch International University, which is part of Sema, is also an important source of funding. Given the impact it has on students who have completed their studies here, this institution has an important role in the structure of the FETÖ network.¹¹⁷¹

In the field of media, FETÖ has its influence in the newspaper "Novo vrijeme", which was previously printed once a week, and some time ago began to be published only with its online edition. Meanwhile, through the Hikmet Publishing House in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the organization translates the books of FETÖ leader Fethullah Gülen into Bosnian.¹¹⁷²

Despite Turkey's efforts to erase FETÖ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its success has been limited. According to Anadolu Agency, after the coup attempt, the educational institution "Bosna Sema" changed ownership twice due to loss of students. Within two years, the schools were sold to an institution called "Global Education" based in the USA, and then transferred to another British institution called "Richmond Park Education". Meanwhile, Burch International University suffered the loss of many of its students due to being affiliated with FETÖ.¹¹⁷³

As an alternative to FETÖ's educational institutions, the Turkish government favored the Foundation for Education Development Sarajevo (SEDEF), founded in Sarajevo in 2001 by a group of businessmen from Turkey and several intellectuals from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have been working together on the realization of the foundation plans.¹¹⁷⁴ During his visit to Sarajevo in 2012, president Erdoğan stressed that SEDEF Foundation is contributing to the higher education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the future will focus towards opening an elementary school and high school.

¹¹⁷⁰ "FETÖ'nün Batı Balkanlar'daki Yapılanması", **Anadolu Agency**, 28.07.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/fetonun-bati-balkanlardaki-yapilanmasi/617149>, [04.09.2020].

¹¹⁷¹ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁷² **Ibid.**

¹¹⁷³ Aliu and Gül, "Lufta Kundër FETO-s", [30.08.2020].

¹¹⁷⁴ "Foundation for Education Development Sarajevo", **Sedef**, <https://www.sedef.ba/en/content/foundation-education-development-sarajevo>, [08.09.2020].

In 2014, the SEDEF Foundation President Mr. Hasan Toplaoğlu took over the Primary School “Isa Beg Isaković“, situated in Grbavica. Aiming to find a place to start school activities, Toplaoğlu has met with the authorities of Canton Sarajevo to talk regarding the options of taking over buildings in Vraca, a place close to Sarajevo. The agreement was reached between the parties and now SEDEF owned the school buildings, which in the past were used by FETÖ - Bosna SEMA educational institutions.¹¹⁷⁵ Through the First Elementary School "Isa-beg Ishaković", International University of Sarajevo (IUS), Kid IUS Kindergarten, and "Maarif College", SEDEF Foundation aims to create a unit that deals with the education of children and students from preschool to university level.¹¹⁷⁶

Regarding the media sector, “Novo Vrijeme” the weekly Gülenist newspaper change the ownership and after that promoted a pro-Erdoğan editorial policy, a fact that proudly was covered in the weekly magazine “Stav” which openly support the SDA of Bakir Izetbegović and the JDP of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.¹¹⁷⁷

It should be noted that despite the close relations between Bosnia and Turkey regarding the closure of FETÖ institutions and the deportation of its members, Bosnia and Herzegovina turned out to have limited success due to its complex federal architecture, and was unable to approve many of Turkey’s requests. However, the Bosniak political leadership took every opportunity to support Ankara’s position.¹¹⁷⁸

A concrete example can be seen in revoking the prize " Sarajevo city Plaque " to Ali Lafcioğlu, a professor who worked in Bosna Sema school, an educational institution close to FETÖ. Sarajevo Deputy Mayor Abdulah Skaka from the SDA political party called the decision of the City Council to award the Sarajevo City Plaque scandalous. According to Skaka, the plaque of the City of Sarajevo is an award to recognize respectable citizens of the city of Sarajevo and all those who are not citizens of BiH. It is

¹¹⁷⁵ “The Breakdown of Gülen Movement in B&H After 20 Years!”, **Sedef**, <https://www.sedef.ba/en/content/breakdown-gulen-movement-bh-after-20-years>, [09.09.2020].

¹¹⁷⁶ “Sarajevo: Turski Ambasador Koc Posjetio Školu “Isa-beg Ishaković” “, **TRT**, 06.09.2019, <https://www.trt.net.tr/bosanski/bosna-i-hercegovina/2019/09/06/sarajevo-turski-ambasador-koc-posjetio-skolu-isa-beg-ishakovic-1264967>, [09.09.2020].

¹¹⁷⁷ Kurt Bassuener, “Pushing on an Open Door: Foreign Authoritarian Influence in the Western Balkans”, **National Endowment for Democracy Working Paper**, (2019): 12.

¹¹⁷⁸ Novaković and Bogosavljević and Albahari, “Analysis Post Zero Problems With Neighbours”, 11.

awarded to those who deserve it, who have in a special way or whose work contributes to the development and reputation of the city of Sarajevo.¹¹⁷⁹ In short, this award does not belong to those who operate and work with structures that support terrorism. For instance, Deputy Mayor Abdullah Skaka is considered to be among the main protagonists who have influenced the revocation of this award.¹¹⁸⁰

Amongst council representatives there were also opinions that decision had an unexplained nature. City Councilor Vibor Hadžić from the political party "Naša Stranka" says that it is especially unclear that neither the Mayor nor the Deputy Mayor Abdullah Skaka had any objections to the decision to award a plaque at the October session of the council, which passed the decision unanimously.¹¹⁸¹ Whereas Miro Lazovi Lazović, deputy chairman of the City Council and vice-president of the Social Democratic Union of BiH, says that those who asked for the decision to be withdrawn argued that fraternal relations with Istanbul, Ankara and Konya would be jeopardized. Lazović says that the argumentation from those who support this decision is that Lafcioglu is indirectly connected with terrorism because he works in Bosna Sema educational institutions.¹¹⁸²

Another example was the rejecting awarding honorary citizenship of Sarajevo to Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk. Pamuk had been nominated for the honorary citizenship price by local publisher and bookshop Buybook, which suggested the Nobel laureate be made an "honorary citizen of Sarajevo". According to Buybook director Damir

¹¹⁷⁹ Zlatan Kapić, Kayhan Gül, "Abdulah Skaka: Skandalozna Odluka o Dodjeli Plakete Lafciogluu", **Anadolu Agency**, 28.10.2016, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/abdulah-skaka-skandalozna-odluka-o-dodjeli-plakete-lafciogluu/674296>, [09.10.2020].

¹¹⁸⁰ Following the pressure made by Deputy Mayor Abdullah Skaka to Sarajevo Mayor Ivo Komšić, the latter sent a request to the Chairman of the City Council of the City of Sarajevo, Suljo Agić, to reconsider the Decision on awarding the "Plaque of the City of Sarajevo" to Professor Ali Lafcioglu from Bosnia Sema educational institutions. The request was accepted by the City Council of the City of Sarajevo and 15 of the 28 councilors changed their first decision and revoked the prize previously awarded to Professor Ali Lafcioglu. Komšić have declared that the adoption of previous decision could have influenced negatively affect the reputation of the City of Sarajevo as the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina and jeopardize the progress made in cooperation with twin and friendly cities from the Republic of Turkey: Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa and Konja. "Gradsko Vijeće Grada Sarajeva Oduzelo Plaketu Profesoru Aliju Lafciogluu", **Klix**, 15.11.2016, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/gradsko-vijece-grada-sarajeva-oduzelo-plaketu-profesoru-aliju-lafciogluu/161115032>, [09.09.2020].; "Ivo Komšić o dodjeli priznanja Aliju Lafciogluu", **N1**, 28.10.2016, <http://ba.n1info.com/Vijesti/a119809/Ivo-Komsic-o-dodjeli-priznanja-Aliju-Lafciogluu.html>, [09.09.2020].

¹¹⁸¹ "SLUČAJ LAFCIOGLU: Zašto su Sarajevske Vlasti Uglednog Profesora Preko Noći Proglasile Teroristom", **Zurnal**, 25.11.2016, <https://zurnal.info/novost/20154/zasto-su-sarajevske-vlasti-uglednog-profesora-preko-noci-proglasile-teroristom>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁸² **Ibid.**

Uzunović, the commission consisted from seven-member firstly voted unanimously in supporting the nomination for the Turkish author as an honorary citizen, but at the second time Pamuk's candidacy was rejected by four votes.¹¹⁸³ Uzunović declared that the council commission's explanation was that Orhan Pamuk did nothing or almost nothing for the city of Sarajevo. Additionally, he says that clearly the commission intended to "spare the current Turkish political regime, a decision that would have been contrary to its wishes".¹¹⁸⁴

Also, Bosnian intellectuals and academics reacted to this decision. According to Nedžad Ibrahimović, a philosophy professor from Tuzla: "The withdrawal of the honor will not affect Pamuk, but is definitely Sarajevo's loss. It's simply a shame. It's embarrassing to read about it in the media."¹¹⁸⁵

The decision was also commented as "disastrous and shameful" by Bosnian writer Ivan Lovrič. Lovrič on his blog wrote that: "Actions like these are proper to regimes that we characterize as repressive, closed, and undemocratic."¹¹⁸⁶

Meanwhile, Bosnian film director Dino Mustafić comments the actions of the Sarajevo city authorities as an "act of self-censorship and servility to the Turkey". Mustafić stress that:

"The explanation given [about Pamuk having 'not done much for Sarajevo'] is absurd and senseless. He is a Nobel prizewinner, one of the greatest living writers, and his contribution to the global cultural heritage is indisputable. There wasn't even any direct pressure from Turkey. Merely a desire to avoid upsetting the sultan in Ankara".¹¹⁸⁷

Lastly, is the decision of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry of Security to cancel the residence permit for four citizens of Turkey that are connected with FETÖ. According to media reports, the decision came after Turkish president Erdoğan's visit to Sarajevo at the beginning of 2019. At the meeting with the Bosnian leadership, Erdoğan's cabinet

¹¹⁸³ "Pressure From Turkey Blamed as Sarajevo Reverses Decision to Honour Orhan Pamuk", **The Guardian**, 20.02.2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/20/sarajevo-reverses-decision-to-make-orhan-pamuk-honorary-citizen-turkey-erdogan>, [09.09.2020].

¹¹⁸⁴ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁸⁵ Gordana Knezevic, "Orhan Pamuk, No Honorary Citizen Of Sarajevo", **Radio Free Europe**, 02.03.2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-turkey-sarajevo-backs-away-from-pamuk-award/29075730.html>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁸⁶ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

reportedly presented a list of persons who Turkey considers as “Gülenists”, members of the Fethullah Gülen network.¹¹⁸⁸

The Serb member of the BiH Presidency Milorad Dodik said that President Erdoğan spoke about persons who live in Bosnia and are in connection with FETÖ, and made certain demands regarding this. Dodik said that the issue with the FETÖ network was also the topic of an earlier meeting in Ankara, and that Erdoğan wants the issue to be resolved institutionally. Dodik stated that the mentioned persons are in the territory of the Federation of BiH and that it is a matter of federal bodies and procedures, a thing that is also clear to Erdoğan.¹¹⁸⁹ Media speculate that Erdoğan sent a clear message to BiH institutions – Turkey will build the Belgrade – Sarajevo motorway, but the persons from the list must be delivered to Turkey.¹¹⁹⁰

It should be stated that procedure for cancelation of resident permit was not easy or simple. First, the Turkish authorities canceled the passports of several Turkey citizens who live in BiH and informed the Foreign Affairs Service BiH about this decision. In the next step, the BiH Service gave them a reasonable deadline to obtain new documents, but they failed to submit evidence within the specified time period. Therefore, the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs withdrew the Turks’ residence permits because they did not fulfil the legal requirements for permanent residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹¹⁹¹

The lawyer of the Turks, Nedim Ademović said that they appealed the decisions [by the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs], but the Security Ministry rejected their appeal, so

¹¹⁸⁸ Mladen Dragojlovic, “BiH Withdraws the Residence Permits of Four Turkish Citizens”, **IBNA**, 30.09.2019, <https://balkan.eu.com/bih-withdraws-the-residence-permits-of-four-turkish-citizens/>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁸⁹ “Dodik: Erdogan Iznio Određene Zahtjeve”, **RTRS**, 07.09.2019, <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=343702>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁹⁰ Dragojlovic, “BiH Withdraws the Residence Permits”, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁹¹ **Ibid.**

administrative proceedings are now being conducted before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹¹⁹²

Authorities in Ankara have formally requested the BiH Ministry of Justice to extradite four Turkish nationals who are sought by on the suspicion of being members of FETÖ. According to BiH newspaper Dnevni Avaz, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina had ruled against the extradition requests because the preconditions for Turkish citizens living in BiH to be extradited to their home country were not fulfilled.¹¹⁹³

Again referring to the newspaper Dnevni Avaz, the suspects are Turkish nationals who have been in BiH since 2016: Hümeýra Gökçen, Ozer Ozsaraj, Etem Erdomuş and Sedat Tozluk. Regarding Tozluk, information says that Turkey has requested his arrest and demanded his extradition on January 30, 2019. However, that request was also rejected, allowing him to stay in BiH.¹¹⁹⁴ Petitions for Gökçen, Erdomuş and Ozsaraj were rejected also in 2018.¹¹⁹⁵

Despite numerous requests from Turkish leadership to close FETÖ-linked institutions and extradite their people to Turkey,¹¹⁹⁶ the desired success has had limited

¹¹⁹² Albina Sorguc, "Bosnia Cancels Four Turks' Residence Permits on Erdogan's Request", **Balkan Insight**, 30.09.2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/30/bosnia-cancels-four-turks-residence-permits-on-erdogans-request/>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁹³ Miralem Aščić, "Ekskluzivno: Koje 'Gulenovce' u BiH Traži Erdoan i šta je Odlučio Sud BiH", **Avaz**, 01.11.2019, <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/526568/ekskluzivno-koje-gulenovce-u-bih-trazi-erdoan-i-sta-je-odlucio-sud-bih>, [11.09.2020].

¹¹⁹⁴ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁹⁵ Mladen Dragojlović, "BiH Court Ruled Against the Extradition of BiH Citizens to Turkey", **IBNA**, 01.11.2019, <https://balkaneu.com/bih-court-ruled-against-the-extradition-of-bih-citizens-to-turkey/>, [10.09.2020].; Daria Sito-Sucic, "Bosnia court rejects extradition of Turkish national over Gulen's links", **Reuters**, 23.04.2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-bosnia-idUSKBN1HU1LJ>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁹⁶ Dženana Halimović, "Hoće li BiH Popustiti Erdoanu i Izručiti 'Gulenovce'?", **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 12.06.2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-erdoan-gulenovci/30049939.html>, [10.09.2020].; Predrag Zvijerac, Dženana Karabegović, "Turska od BiH Traži Zaustavljanje Gulenista", **Radio Slobodna Evropa**, 29.03.2018, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/turski-premijer-u-sarajevu/29130531.html>, [10.09.2020]; Emina Dizdarevic, "Turkey Asks Bosnia to Extradite Alleged 'Gulenist'", **Balkan Insight**, 22.11.2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/11/22/turkey-asks-bosnia-to-extradite-alleged-gulenist-11-22-2018/>, [10.09.2020].; "Erdogan od BiH Traži Izručenje Pristalica Fetulaha Gulena", **Euroactiv**, 09.07.2019, <https://euractiv.rs/7-eu-i-zapadni-balkan/36-vesti/13960-erdogan-od-bih-trai-izruenje-pristalica-fetulaha-gulena>, [10.09.2020].

achievements due to the complicated political architecture of Bosnia as mentioned earlier. In these limited successes, the biggest supporter of Erdoğan in BiH has undoubtedly been Bakir Izetbegović and his party SDA, which has long been vocal in his support of the Turkish president in the battle with FETÖ.

In the Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections of 2018, some European countries decided not to permit Turkish politicians to do political campaign within their state. In the case of Germany, their authorities emphasized that, “No election and political campaigns will be allowed in Germany three months prior to an election in a foreign country”.¹¹⁹⁷ Another decision resulted from fear of a threat to public order pointed out by the Dutch government. Austria, Netherlands and Germany had also not allowed to the politicians from Turkey to do campaign for the referendum held in Turkey on April 16, 2017.¹¹⁹⁸

In a situation where European countries did not allow Erdoğan to hold election campaign rally in their countries, BiH was the one who opened the door for him to do so. The rally took place in Sarajevo’s Olympic hall Zetra on May 20, 2018. According to Anadolu agency, some 12,000 people attended the rally, while 10,000 more followed it outside the hall. In addition to Turks, local Bosniaks and other Bosnian Muslims also attended the rally.¹¹⁹⁹

Before the rally, both Erdoğan and Izetbegović held a meeting at the BiH Presidency building. This visit was planned for June, but on Erdoğan’s request, it was re-scheduled for May 20, an appropriate date for both leaders. According to media sources, there was no state protocol at the beginning of the visit. The other two members of the Presidency, Dragan Čović and Mladen Ivanić, did not meet with Erdoğan, because the visit was

¹¹⁹⁷ “Germany, Netherlands Announce they will not Allow Turkish Politicians to Campaign for Elections”, **Stockholm Center for Freedom**, 21.04.2018, <https://stockholmcfr.org/germany-netherlands-announce-they-will-not-allow-turkish-politicians-to-campaign-for-elections/>, [10.09.2020].

¹¹⁹⁸ **Ibid.**

¹¹⁹⁹ Hamdi Firat Buyuk, “Erdoğan Stages Showpiece Election Rally in Bosnian Capital”, **Balkan Insight**, 20.05.2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/05/20/erdogan-sarajevo-rally-is-the-sign-of-his-great-victory-in-coming-elections-05-20-2018/>, [11.09.2020].

described as a “working visit” with the participation in the 6th General Assembly of Union of the European Turkish Democrats.¹²⁰⁰

At the rally, Izetbegović said glorifying words for his friend Erdoğan, stressing that:

“They tried to separate both Turks and Bosniaks from their faith, identity, history and pride. But, as the hadith of the Messenger of God says, every 100 years God sends a man who will restore faith to one nation. And when he helps him, no one can beat him. We had Alija Izetbegović. We can't explain how we managed to defend ourselves. This could only be done by God's intervention. Today you cannot explain how Turkey manages to carry such a burden and weight, so many enemies inside and outside its borders, with the millions of refugees it cares for, Turkey deals with all of this in a great way. You now have a man sent by God. His name is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.”¹²⁰¹

He added that the citizens of Turkey have an obligation to help him, to be on the right side and for that side to prevail. “Those are your votes, Turks from Europe. Be with your leader, be with Turkey, be with the victory “, concluded Izetbegović.¹²⁰²

This event gave Erdogan great advantage. Erdoğan showed EU countries that although he was not allowed to hold election campaign rallies within their borders, another state in Europe offered him this opportunity. He gathered a good number of Turkish citizens in one place, showing them that he never forgot them and is ready to do everything in his power to meet them face to face. Last but not least, he demonstrated to Turkish voters in BiH that his power and influence extends beyond Turkey.¹²⁰³ In another way, Izetbegović sees Turkey and Erdogan as a “protector” for the Bosniak nation in BiH. Before his death, his father, late Alija Izetbegović, had said that he provides Erdoğan with Bosnia and Herzegovina as behest (amanet), to take care about the Bosniaks.¹²⁰⁴

4.2.6. The Struggle with FETÖ Network in Kosovo

For Turkey, Kosovo represents a country of interest dating back to the early 1990s. The Turkish state has been in close contact with Kosovo in all the most important processes of this state, starting from the war in Kosovo to NATO intervention, the process of

¹²⁰⁰ Mladen Dragojlovic, “Erdogan Demonstrated Political Force”, **IBNA**. 21.05.2018, <https://balkan.eu.com/erdogan-demonstrated-political-force/>, [10.09.2020].

¹²⁰¹ “Izetbegović Građanima Turske u Zetri: Imate Čovjeka Kojeg je Bog Poslao, Podržite ga”, **Sandzacke**, 20.05.2018, <http://sandzacke.rs/featured/izetbegovic-gradjanima-turske-u-zetri-imate-čovjeka-kojeg-je-bog-poslao-podrzite-ga/>, [10.09.2020].

¹²⁰² **Ibid.**

¹²⁰³ Dragojlovic, “Erdogan Demonstrated Political Force”, [10.09.2020].

¹²⁰⁴ **Ibid.**

independence, lobbying for the recognition of independence, and in many direct and indirect ways. The reason for such interest from Turkey has multiple facets, starting from the history of the past, kinship, cultural ties, the presence of the Turkish minority in Kosovo, geopolitical interests vis-a-vis other powers present in the Western Balkans, etc.

In addition to the institutional presence of the Turkish state in Kosovo, we must also take into account how the civil society presence was inevitable in Kosovo. This is due to the circumstances resulting from the state-building of this country and the need for assistance in all social segments.

As in other Balkan countries, FETÖ's network is present also in Kosovo. Under the guise of civil society, the first steps of FETÖ in Kosovo were taken after the end of the war in 1998-1999, more exactly after the intervention by NATO. Earlier, some members (groups) of Gülen supporters who participated with their role in the structuring of Albania began coming to Kosovo. This saw the start of structuring FETÖ influences in this state. As in any other country, also in Kosovo FETÖ prioritized the education sector.¹²⁰⁵

The first steps towards education in Kosovo were taken in 2000 in the capital of Prishtina with the establishment of a high school named "Mehmet Akif School". It was the first private school opened in post-war Kosovo. It started its activity in the premises of the high school "Gjin Gazuli" in Prishtina. A year later, it transferred to a building located in Velani, and later to the building located in Veternik. In the 2021 school year, the college moved to its current facility in Banullë-Lipjan. Teaching takes place at the level of upper secondary school (10-12) in the scientific field.¹²⁰⁶ The second school the International School of Prishtina (ISP) was opened in 2002 in "Velania" Pristina on the premises of the College "Mehmet Akif". A year later it moved to new premises in Veterinik. The 2011-2012 school year was spent in its own building in "Marigona Residence". ISP has a kindergarten, primary school (grades 1-5) and secondary school

¹²⁰⁵ "Politikanet Kryesore te Kosoves i Dergojne Femijet ne Shkollat e Gylenit", **Insajderi**, 2016, <https://insajderi.com/politikanet-kryesore-te-kosoves-dergojne-femijet-ne-shkollat-e-gylenit/>, [11.09.2020].

¹²⁰⁶ "Mehmet Akif School", <http://www.mackosova.com/history/>, [11.09.2020].

(6-9).¹²⁰⁷ These schools established their branches in several cities of Kosovo: 2006 in Prizren, 2010 in Lipjan and Gjakova. In Prizren, they opened the Yllka Kindergarten. All these schools and kindergartens are connected with a company called Gulistan Educational Institutions. At the head of this company Mustafa Erdem, a person related to FETÖ.¹²⁰⁸

In order to strengthen its position in Kosovo, FETÖ developed its activity through non-governmental organizations. The educational-cultural Foundation "Atmosfera" was one of the first to be established with the main purpose to organize and cooperate with associations of craftsmen (traders). Talip Aktaş was the general director of the Atmosfera association in Kosovo. After serving his duty for 8 years in a row in Albania, in 2004 he came to Kosovo.¹²⁰⁹

Additionally, the Foundation "Atmosfera" opened dormitories for students who attend classes in high schools and universities in several cities such as Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, and Gjilan. Within these dormitories, different activities were provided for students like organizing math lectures, science subjects, as well as language courses and the organization of fairs.¹²¹⁰

In 2013, Hasan Nahi High Gymnasium was established under the operation of the foundation Atmosfera. Hasan Nahi Gymnasium is a scientific gymnasium with modern infrastructure. In this school science merges with morality. The curriculum of this gymnasium is particularly oriented to scientific subjects and has a complement of moral subjects. Scientific courses are conducted in English by qualified teachers while social courses are conducted in Albanian. The classrooms are equipped with advanced technology in the field of contemporary education.¹²¹¹

¹²⁰⁷ "International School of Prishtina", <http://www.ispkosova.com/about-us/>, [11.09.2020].

¹²⁰⁸ "Politikanet Kryesore te Kosoves", [11.09.2020].

¹²⁰⁹ Ayhan Demir, "FETÖ Kosova Yapılanması", **Yeni Akit**, October 2016, <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/ayhan-demir/feto-kosova-yapilanmasi-16783.html>, [11.09.2020].

¹²¹⁰ **Ibid.**

¹²¹¹ "Gjimnazi Hasan Nahi", <http://www.findglocal.com/XK/Lipjan/797578253610911/Gjimnazi-Hasan-Nahi>, [11.09.2020].

Many children of Kosovo's politicians and bureaucrats attended classes through scholarships at FETÖ-linked schools. The son of Hashim Thaçi, former president of the Republic of Kosovo, is a graduate of the “Mehmet Akif school”. The children of former Parliament Speaker Jakup Krasniqi, former Minister of Economy Ahmet Shala, former Minister of Defense Agim Çeku, former Minister of Health Ferit Agani, have all graduated through scholarships in FETÖ's schools. The children of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Enver Hoxhaj, as well as the children of the former Speaker of the Parliament of Kosovo Kadri Veseli are continuing their education in these schools through scholarships.¹²¹²

It is worth mentioning the fact that in a certain period of time, the state of Kosovo has given support in various forms to the structure of FETÖ. For example, in February 2011 under former mayor of Prizren Municipality Ramadan Muja, to the Gülistan Educational Institutions were given public land free of charge for the construction of Mehmet Akif College. The college in Prizren was opened in December 2011, and campus was built on a total area of 50 thousand square meters. This means that this land was given them without paying nothing.¹²¹³ However in 2012, Prizren City Councilor Ridvan Hoxha brought this issue to the judgment. The Prizren District Prosecutor Office was found guilty of criminal charges by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo - EULEX. Hoxha stressed that: "The municipal property (land) was allocated to Mehmet Akif College which is part of the Gülistan Education and Training Center before being presented to the Prizren Municipal Assembly". The trial of this case lasted three years. The court found former mayor of Prizren Ramadan Muja guilty as a result of abuse of duty. Muja was sentenced to two years in prison,¹²¹⁴ but he called the decision into appeal. The Court of Appeals upheld the sentence of one-year probation for the former

¹²¹² Demir, “FETÖ Kosova Yapılanması”, [11.09.2020].

¹²¹³ Ayhan Demir, “FETÖ Kosova Yapılanması – 2”, **Yeni Akit**, 19.10.2016, <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/ayhan-demir/feto-kosova-yapilanmasi-2-16866.html>, [11.09.2020].

¹²¹⁴ **Ibid.**

mayor as a result of misuse of municipal property managed by the Privatization Agency of Kosovo.¹²¹⁵

A similar case occurred in Lipjan municipality. In 2008, Lipjan Mayor Shukri Buja, allocated land to the Gülistan Education and Training Center where the “Lipjan Mehmet Akif College” was built. The FETÖ college campus settlement is built in a 52 thousand square meter land on the Prishtina-Skopje highway.¹²¹⁶

According to MP Ismajl Kurteshi, a member of the Parliamentary Commission from the "Vetëvendosje" movement, Kosovo is a sovereign state and it should be unacceptable to close these schools regardless of who requests it. Kurteshi says that whether these schools should be closed or not, the initiative or the evaluation should come from the state institutions where the schools are open and from the professionals in the field of education. Kurteshi calls for institutions not to be influenced by anyone.¹²¹⁷

MP Teuta Haxhiu, member of the Parliamentary Commission from AAK, also demands that the laws of Kosovo be respected and not be helden to the requests of any individual or state. Haxhiu says that someone else should not interfere in the issue of education in the country, and that if performance is poor in the schools of the Gulen network, they also should not be closed in the middle of the year. She says her children have been educated in public schools. According to her, Kosovo institutions should deal with those who are producing low quality cadres and not with closing schools.¹²¹⁸

Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Arsim Bajrami has stated that there is no request from Turkey for the closure of Turkish schools Mehmet Akif, and added that even if there was such a request, it would not be approved. According to Bajrami, this issue concerns the internal affairs of Kosovo. Bajrami assessed that these schools have opened this debate after the events in Turkey, but the official position of the ministry is to respect the constitution of Kosovo, and that educational policies should be built on the

¹²¹⁵ “Apeli ia Vërteton Dënimin për Korrupsion Ish-Kryetarit të Prizrenit, Ramadan Muja”, **Zeri**, 22.09.2020, <https://zeri.info/aktuale/368787/apeli-ia-verteton-denimin-per-korrupsion-ish-kryetarit-te-prizrenit-ramadan-muja>, [12.09.2020].

¹²¹⁶ Demir, “FETÖ Kosova Yapılanması ”, [11.09.2020].

¹²¹⁷ **Ibid.**

¹²¹⁸ **Ibid.**

dome of the government. He further states that there has been no request from the Minister of Education in Turkey to close schools.¹²¹⁹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo has also confirmed that it has not received any official request from Turkey to close these schools.¹²²⁰

A public request from the Turkish leadership for the closure of FETÖ's schools was not long in coming. In his visit to Kosovo, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu urged Kosovo government to close all schools of the FETÖ due to its status in Turkey and attempted coup.¹²²¹ Following this request, the Council for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF)¹²²² reacted to the demand, stressing that Turkey is interfering in Kosovo's internal affairs. This council has demanded that Kosovo to not interfere in the conflict between Erdoğan and Gülen, but be neutral.¹²²³

Regarding the extradition of FETÖ members, Turkey has constantly requested their extradition to Turkey. In October 2017, Turkish citizen and FETÖ member Uğur Toksöy was arrested in Prizren after which an international arrest warrant was issued. According to the prosecution, the suspect was remanded in custody. Toksöy worked as an educator at the Atmosfera Foundation and was arrested on charges of participating in a coup attempt. Toksöy was questioned by the Court of Kosovo and provided proper documents

¹²¹⁹ “Bajrami: Nuk do ti Mbyllim Shkollat Turke në Kosovë”, **Radio Kosova e Lire**, 29.09.2016, <https://www.radiokosovaelire.com/bajrami-nuk-ti-mbyllim-shkollat-turke-ne-kosove/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²²⁰ “MPJ: Nuk Kemi Kërkesë Zyrtare për Mbylljen e Shkollave Turke”, **Ekonomia Online**, 21.06.2017, https://ekonomiaonline.com/nacionale/arsim/mpj-nuk-kemi-kerkese-zyrtare-per-mbylljen-e-shkollave-turke/?page_similar_news=5, [12.09.2020].

¹²²¹ “Çavusoglu Kërkon Mbylljen e Shkollave të Gylenit në Kosovë”, **Epoka e Re**, 19.10.2018, <https://www.epokaere.com/cavusoglu-kerkon-mbylljen-e-shkollave-te-gylenit-ne-kosove/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²²² The Council for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF), based in Pristina, is among first NGO's established in Kosovo. The CDHRF was formed on 14 December 1989 by a group of human rights activists who spoke on behalf of those who had been denied any rights and whose basic human rights had been violated. CDHRF is a heterogeneous organization in terms of intellectual and national structure. The CDHRF also has honorary members from various European countries and the United States who represent the CDHRF in certain situations. Adem Demaçi, winner of the Sakharov Prize, was the honorary chairman of the CDHRF. The CDHRF is a member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) based in Paris and a member of the Balkan Human Rights Network (namely the Steering Committee of this network). The CDHRF is also a member of the Association of Endangered Peoples in Gottingen (Germany). <http://www.cdhrf.net/>, [13.09.2020].

¹²²³ “KMDLNj: Turqia po Ndërhyn në Punët e Brendshme të Kosovës”, **Epoka e Re**, <https://www.epokaere.com/kmdlj-turqia-po-nderhyn-ne-punet-e-brendshme-te-kosoves/>, [12.09.2020].

and a valid residence permit in Kosovo. According to the decision of the prosecution, the suspect was initially remanded in custody.¹²²⁴

It is supposed that Toksoy's arrest came immediately after the visit of Turkey's Prosecutor General Mehmet Akarcı on October 4, 2017 in Pristina. He met with Kosovo's Minister of Justice Abelard Tahiri and the Chief State Prosecutor, Aleksandër Lumezi. Akarcı expressed satisfaction an agreement was reached to deepen cooperation between the judiciary of Turkey and Kosovo in the fight against terrorism and terrorist organizations, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PPK), the Islamic State (ISIS) and FETÖ.¹²²⁵ Turkish media has reported that the Kosovo authorities have been handed a list with the names of 25 Turkish citizens who are being investigated by Turkey.¹²²⁶

A week after assigning 40 days of detention, the Basic Court of Prishtina released Uğur Toksöy on bail on 03.11.2017. His detention measure was terminated. Toksöy's passport was confiscated until the extradition procedure is completed, the ruling says.¹²²⁷

On December 14, 2017, the prosecution in Kosovo rejected Turkey's request for his extradition on charges of involvement in the coup in July 2016. Kosovo prosecutor Ali Rexha said that Ankara has not provided sufficient evidence for his extradition, but left open the possibility of reopening the case if evidence is provided.¹²²⁸ "I asked for evidence from Turkey and it did not come, and for this reason we withdrew the request for extradition", said Rexha. He also stressed that there are no other persons for whom extradition has been requested.¹²²⁹ Upon the rejection of the prosecution of Kosovo for extradition of Toksöy in Turkey, Toksöy stressed that he did not see any evidence against him in the court. He said that:

¹²²⁴ "Në Kosovë Arrestohet një Shtetas Turk pas të cilit është Lëshuar Fletëarrest Ndërkombëtar", **Portalb**, 28.10.2017, <https://portalb.mk/465771-ne-kosove-arrestohet-nje-shtetas-turk-pas-te-cilit-eshte-leshuar-fletearrest-nderkombetar/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²²⁵ Amra Zejneli-Loxha, "Turqia Kërkon Ekstradimin e Shtetasit të saj nga Kosova", **Radio Evropa e Lire**, 02.11.2017, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/turqia-kerkon-ekstradimin-e-shtetasit-te-saj-nga-kosova-/28831687.html>, [12.09.2020].

¹²²⁶ **Ibid.**

¹²²⁷ "Lirohet me Dorëzani Gulenisti i Arrestuar në Prizren", **Prizren Press**, 11.03.2017, <http://prizrenpress.com/lirohet-dorezani-gulenisti-arrestuar-ne-prizren/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²²⁸ "Prokuroria e Kosovës Refuzon Ekstradimin e një Shtetasi Turk", **Zeri i Amerikes**, 14.12.2017, <https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/kosovo-turkey/4163617.html>, [12.09.2020].

¹²²⁹ Labinot Leposhtica, "Tërhiqet Kërkesa për Ekstradim të Ugur Toksoy-t", **Kallxo**, 14.12.2017, <https://kallxo.com/shkurt/terhiqet-kerkesa-per-ekstradim-te-ugur-toksoy-t/>, [12.09.2020].

“My arrest and my release were based on no evidence. If there was any evidence to suggest that I am a terrorist, I shouldn’t have been released. But there is no evidence to support this. And it is very sad to see Kosovo being a part of this and humiliating itself in front of the international community”.¹²³⁰

Analyst Besir Bajrami called the arrest an act of “diplomatic aggression,” and said that “Albanians should learn to act independently. The case of Ugur Toksöy is a typical diplomatic aggression towards Kosovo,” he said.¹²³¹ Meanwhile, Turkish legal expert Mehmet Onur Çevik, stressed that the possible extradition of Toksöy from Kosovo would have been a political issue and not just a legal issue. According to him, Kosovo has been faced with two scenarios. One option is to follow the EU practice and not to extradite Toksöy to Turkey until the political situation changes. In that case, Kosovo would certainly damage its relations with Turkey and President Erdoğan. The second option would be to follow the example of Pakistan¹²³², and in this case Kosovo would damage its relations with the EU.¹²³³

From this "battle" between the Turkish authorities and Uğur Toksöy, it seemed that Toksöy came out victorious. According to Kosovar media, Toksöy applied for asylum on November 3, 2017 and this request was accepted on March 28, 2018. The news about this recognition of refugee status was confirmed by lawyer Leutrim Sylja. In his application filed on November 3, Toksöy stated that in his country of origin he was the object of persecution of a political nature and by returning there he would encounter serious harm for political reasons. The Department for Citizenship, Asylum and

¹²³⁰ Jeta Xharra, Faith Bailey, “Heightened Anxieties in Kosovo After Arrest of ‘Gülenist Educator’”, **Prishtina Insight**, 15.12.2017, <https://prishtinainsight.com/heightened-anxieties-kosovo-arrest-gulenist-educator-mag/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²³¹ **Ibid.**

¹²³² Pakistan has expelled more than 100 Turkish teachers from 28 international schools in response to Turkey’s claim that they are linked with U.S.-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen. Pakistanis English newspaper Dawn has reported that the Nawaz Sharif administration had been under “extreme” pressure to act against the Turkish teachers and their families ahead of Erdogan’s visit. While Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, described the decision as “very pleasing,”. For more see: “Scores of Turkish Teachers Have Been Expelled From Pakistan”, **Time**, 17.11.2016, <https://time.com/4574320/turkish-teachersfethullah-gulen-expelled-pakistan/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²³³ Die Morina, “Kosova në Dilemë për Kërkesën për Ekstradim nga Turqia”, **Reporter**, <https://www.reporter.al/kosova-ne-dileme-per-kerkesen-per-ekstradim-nga-turqia/>, [12.09.2020].

Migration at the Ministry of Interior of Kosovo recognized this right to Toksöy and assessed that the asylum seeker fulfills the refugee status.¹²³⁴

While being unable to extradite Uğur Toksöy can be considered a loss for Turkish authorities, but, in another part this period the Turkish Intelligence Agency (MIT) made perhaps its biggest achievement in terms of fighting the FETÖ network in the Western Balkans region. Through an operation on 29.03.2018, they managed to capture six members of FETÖ in Kosovo and extradite them to Turkey. Cihan Özkan, Kahraman Demirez, Hasan Hüseyin Günakan, Mustafa Erdem, Osman Karakaya and Yusuf Karabina were brought to Turkey by a special plane by MIT.¹²³⁵ According to the Anadolu Agency, the six FETÖ fugitives had been operating in the Balkans, engaged in assisting the organization's employees in Turkey to escape to European countries and the USA.¹²³⁶

Anadolu Agency and security forces confirmed that Özkan had fundraised in the Balkans under the guise of charity in the Balkan states, which he then transferred to Pennsylvania where Fetullah Gülen is located. Meanwhile, Demirez, responsible for youth structuring in Kosovo, worked actively in the Balkan countries and played a role in a large number of people joining the organization. Günakan was responsible for teachers in school structures in the region. Other names brought to Turkey are learned to have been high-ranking figures responsible for structuring FETÖ in various institutions and organizations. In particular, it is learned that Osman Karakaya played an active role in the Ergenekon process, during which time he prepared reports in favor of FETÖ at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Istanbul, and for this reason was awarded decoration by the head of FETÖ.¹²³⁷

¹²³⁴ “Kosova i Njeh Azilin Gylenistit të Kërkuar nga Turqia”, <https://www.albinfo.ch/kosova-i-njeh-azilin-gylenistit-te-kerkuar-nga-turqia/>, **Albinfo**, 06.04.2018, <https://www.albinfo.ch/kosova-i-njeh-azilin-gylenistit-te-kerkuar-nga-turqia/>, [12.09.2020].

¹²³⁵ “Six Top FETÖ Suspects in Balkans arrested in Kosovo, Brought to Turkey”, **Daily Sabah**, 29.03.2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/29/six-top-feto-suspects-in-balkans-arrested-in-kosovo-brought-to-turkey>, [13.09.2020].

¹²³⁶ “6 Pjesëtarë të FETO-s Ekstradohen nga Kosova në Turqi”, **Anadolu Agency**, 29.03.2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/6-pjes%C3%ABtar%C3%AB-t%C3%AB-feto-s-ekstradohen-nga-kosova-n%C3%AB-turqi/1102777>, [13.09.2020].

¹²³⁷ **Ibid.**

According to Turkish media, it is said that MIT had started its preparations for this operation 9 months before. In accordance with the technical follow-up decisions from courts in Turkey, MIT followed all forms of communication from these persons. In coordination with the security units in the Balkans, they managed to detect the whereabouts of the six people and carry out the operation successfully.¹²³⁸

While Turkey viewed this operation as a great success, Kosovo faced chaos as a result. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj fired the Minister of Internal Affairs, Flamur Sefaj, and the Director of the Intelligence Agency (KIA), Driton Gashi. Haradinaj said that he was not informed in time about these arrests. The dismissal of the two senior officials was justified in a press release with the argument that the MIT operation happened without informing the Prime Minister and without his permission. In the dismissal letter, Haradinaj emphasizes that these actions are completely unacceptable and contrary to the values and principles of Kosovo, as a people and as a state.¹²³⁹

Meanwhile, Lawyer Tome Gashi claims that Erdoğan has put direct pressure on President Hashim Thaçi and Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli, who met at the United Nations in New York. On the Tv show "DPT Te Fidani", Gashi said that "Turkey is behaving as if we are still their vassal country. Our statesmen are not rejecting Erdogan's influence."¹²⁴⁰

Three days after the MIT operation in Turkey, the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi stated that he has a detailed report from the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA) which states that the reason for the deportation of six Turkish citizens relates to illegal actions in Kosovo. President Thaçi said that:

“The only reason...according to KIA, is the endangerment of national security. There have been such cases in the past. But the details and procedures must be clarified by the KIA and the

¹²³⁸ “MiT’ten FETO’ye Balkan darbesi!”, **Milliyet**, 30.03.2018, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/mit-ten-feto-ye-balkan-darbesi-2637401>, [13.09.2020].

¹²³⁹ “Kosovë, Haradinaj Shkarkon Ministrin e Brendshëm dhe Kreun e AKI-së”, **Top Channel**, 30.03.2018, <https://top-channel.tv/2018/03/30/kosove-haradinaj-shkarkon-ministrin-e-brendshem-dhe-kreun-e-aki-se/>, [13.09.2020].

¹²⁴⁰ “Erdoğan i Bëri Presion Direkt Thaçit e Pacollit për Arrestimin e Shtetasve Turq”, **Gazeta Blic**, <https://gazetablic.com/erdogan-beri-presion-direkt-thacit-e-pacollit-per-arrestimin-e-shtetasve-turq/>, [16.09.2020].

Ministry of Internal Affairs...and in case there have been violations, then those responsible must be held accountable, whoever they are.”¹²⁴¹

The President of Kosovo also stressed that the case is being investigated by the competent state bodies and the Ombudsman. According to him, we should wait for final conclusions.¹²⁴²

President Hashim Thaçi recalled that terrorist and espionage activities in Kosovo and other democratic countries are carried out in more sophisticated forms. But, Thaçi did not clarify which terrorist activities were in question, nor did he clarify whether he was referring to the six deported Turkish citizens. However, Thaçi said that, “Under no circumstances will this omission that has occurred be allowed to be politically abused by anyone”.¹²⁴³

On the other hand, after meeting with the Kosovo Security Council on 31.03.2018, Prime Minister Haradinaj sought full coverage of the event expelling these foreign nationals from Kosovo.¹²⁴⁴

Following the events after the MIT operation in Kosovo, Turkish President Erdoğan has expressed regret over the actions of Kosovo Prime Minister Haradinaj. He publicly articulated this despair at the party's regular congresses in the Pendik of Istanbul. In front of the party supporters in Pendik, Erdoğan stressed that :

“The Prime Minister of Kosovo removed from office the person in charge of intelligence and the Minister of Interior. I now ask the Prime Minister of Kosovo: On whose instructions did you take such a step? Since when did you start defending those who tried to overthrow the Republic of Turkey?”¹²⁴⁵

Erdoğan continued with rhetorical questions, saying:

¹²⁴¹ Zijadin Gashi, “Thaçi e Haradinaj Shtojnë Konfuzionin Rreth Deportimit të Shtetasve Turq”, **Radio Evropa e Lire**, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/thaci-haradinaj-konfuzione-rreth-deportimit-te-shtetasve-turq/29137209.html>, [14.09.2020].

¹²⁴² **Ibid.**

¹²⁴³ **Ibid.**

¹²⁴⁴ **Ibid.**

¹²⁴⁵ “Gülenistët, Erdogan-Haradinajt: Do japësh llogari!”, 31.03.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oyt6Bzp3hq8&ab_channel=TopChannelAlbania, [13.08.2020].

"How can you feed these people who have made a coup attempt against Turkey, which welcomes Kosovo as a brother. You will also be held accountable for this. My Kosovar brothers do not give credibility to a prime minister like you. My Kosovar brothers, the Kosovars I know, will hold you accountable for this".¹²⁴⁶

The intense criticism towards Prime Minister Haradinaj was also expressed at the sixth regular congress of the party in Hatay. There, the Turkish president stated that the operation against the Gülenist Movement in Kosovo was neither the first nor will be the last. In front of the party supporters, Erdoğan said:

"From here I thank the president of Kosovo. But I say 'shame' to the prime minister. The dismissal of the head of intelligence, the interior minister, who gave us the members of the terrorist organization FETÖ, is a historic mistake. They did their job".¹²⁴⁷

Erdoğan continued emphasizing that Turkey is the second country after the USA to recognize Kosovo's independence. Through rhetorical questions, he asked how the prime minister of Kosovo can do this to Turkey? What politics is this? The Turkish president concluded by saying that he knows very well that his Kosovar brothers do not accept the step taken by their prime minister.¹²⁴⁸

There was also a counter-reaction from the Prime Minister Haradinaj. He chose a commemoration activity on the occasion of the 550th anniversary of the death of the Albanian national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg who fought the Ottomans for 25 years, to reply to the Turkish President. In this occasion Prime Minister Haradinaj said that:

"By commemorating Gjergj Kastriot Skenderbeu, we show that Kosovo and all Albanians everywhere have deep roots. For those who judge us from afar, the first thing I can tell them is that they do not know us, they have lack of knowledge [of] Albanians...they know that it is never in our tradition to interfere into someone else's house. Kosovo and I have not interfered in the internal affairs of Turkey, neither in the past, nor today, nor in the future, but...we will not allow someone else to do our housework in the name of Kosovo. Let everyone know this".¹²⁴⁹

Kosovar public opinion, more exactly state officials and political analysts, also reacted to the harsh words of the Turkish president. Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly Kadri

¹²⁴⁶ **Ibid.**

¹²⁴⁷ "Recep Tayyip Erdogan : 'Turp ju Qoftë' Ramush Haradinaj", 01.04.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-P53kwYBvU&ab_channel=Arnavut90, [14.09.2020].

¹²⁴⁸ **Ibid.**

¹²⁴⁹ "Haradinaj i Përgjigjet Erdoganit - Top Channel Albania - News – Lajme", 02.04.2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vjxkBMNMb0&ab_channel=TopChannelAlbania, [14.09.2020].

Veseli was also surprised by Erdoğan's statements addressed to the Prime Minister of Kosovo. Veseli emphasized that:

“These statements are disturbing because they come from the leader of a friendly country, whose support has been continuously proven before and throughout the existence of our state. Therefore, such statements do not contribute to strengthening friendship and mutual cooperation, for which our country has been and is committed”.¹²⁵⁰

According to him, the actions of Kosovo institutions are sovereign and as such cannot be subject to external pressures.¹²⁵¹

Publicist Veton Surroi also reacted to Erdoğan's threat against Prime Minister Haradinaj, saying in a Facebook post that: "The decision to abduct and hand over six Turkish citizens has already created the expected incident in relations with Turkey." According to him, President Erdoğan's reaction was emotional, but that of Kosovo should not be such.¹²⁵² However, as Surroi says, the Kosovo authorities need to react. Publicist Surroi proposed some points that the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs can convey to the Turkish Embassy:

"1. Kosovo considers Turkey an important ally since the days of NATO intervention for freedom as well as leading to post-independence recognition.

2. We are concerned with the statement of President Erdoğan, especially when we know...the friendly feeling he has for... Kosovo. The words addressed to our Prime Minister do not reflect the traditional sense of friendship

3. The Government of the Republic of Kosovo has taken measures against its officials for disregarding procedures, laws and norms of the Constitution of the country, on the occasion of handing over six Turkish citizens to the Turkish authorities. The government is extremely concerned about the possible violation of European conventions, which, as a European state, are part of our legal regulation.

4. The Prime Minister of Kosovo is elected in a regular democratic procedure. His mandate is derived from the civic vote and he responds to it. As we have stated every time, even with the anti-constitutional attempt to overthrow the government in Turkey in 2015, there is only one form of ending the term of the Prime Minister, it is with the Constitution of the country.

5. We hope to continue the communication, without this unnecessary emotional burden."¹²⁵³

¹²⁵⁰ Bekim Shehu, “Kosovë: Haradinaj i Kundërpërgjigjet Erdoganit”, **Deutsche Welle**, 03.04.2018, <https://www.dw.com/sq/kosov%C3%AB-haradinaj-i-kund%C3%ABrp%C3%ABrgjigjet-erdoganit/a-43234878>, [14.09.2020].

¹²⁵¹ **Ibid.**

¹²⁵² “Haradinaj Nuk i Komenton Kërcënimet e Erdoganit - Analistë e Zyrtarë Shtetërorë e Cilësojnë Incident Diplomatik”, **Koha**, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/84373/haradinaj-nuk-i-komenton-kercenimet-e-erdoganit-analiste-e-zyrtare-shteterore-e-cilesojne-incident-diplomatik/>, [14.09.2020].

¹²⁵³ **Ibid.**

Kosovo's Ambassador to the USA, Vlora Çitaku, also came to the defense of Ramush Haradinaj after Turkish President Erdoğan threatened the head of the Kosovo Government. Çitaku, even invited the citizens of Kosovo to protest against him. Through a status on the social network Facebook, she wrote that the Parliament and the citizens of Kosovo elect the Prime Minister.¹²⁵⁴

There were also personalities who saw the reaction and approach of the Turkish president as reasonable regarding this case. The chairman of the "Fjala" party, Gezim Kelmendi, said that the statement of Turkish President Erdoğan was right. "A right statement towards a country that Erdoğan has done a lot for. It is paradoxical to return it to Erdogan in this way, that has done a lot for Kosovo," said Kelmendi.¹²⁵⁵ Whereas Sulejman Çerkezi from the "Movement for Justice", said that we are unnecessarily throwing bitterness, since, according to him, the problem lies inside Kosovo. "We have the problem inside; it has nothing to do with Erdoğan. It is the problem inside, because we have five prime ministers acting on their own. "Erdoğan told the truth, because the prime minister does not know the things in his house", said Çerkezi.¹²⁵⁶

One week after the operation by the MIT in Kosovo, on April 5, 2018 the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo held an extraordinary session at the request of 40 deputies. By a majority vote, they approved the recommendations regarding the extradition case from Kosovo to Turkey. According to the agreed recommendations between the parliamentary groups, it is likely that a parliamentary commission of inquiry will be established to investigate this deportation while the parliamentary groups are required to send the names of their representatives in this commission to the Presidency of the Assembly. In order to fully clarify this issue, the Assembly obliges all relevant institutions to respond

¹²⁵⁴ "Reagime në Kosovë pas Deklaratës së Erdoganit", **Idividi**, 01.04.2018, <http://www.idividi.com.mk/shqip/balkan/1181913/index.html>, [15.09.2020].

¹²⁵⁵ "Kelmendi e Çerkezi Mbrojnë Deklaratat e Erdoganit Kundër Haradinajt", **Telegrafi**, 03.04.2018, <https://telegrafi.com/kelmendi-e-cerkezi-mbrojne-deklaratat-e-erdoganit-kunder-haradinajtvideo/>, [14.09.2020].

¹²⁵⁶ **Ibid.**

to the requests of the investigative commission regarding the issue in question.¹²⁵⁷ With 58 votes in favor and one against, this commission was formed.¹²⁵⁸

The parliamentary inquiry commission was comprised of the following:

- Xhelal Sveçla, chairman, parliamentary group ("Vetëvendosje")
- Driton Selmanaj, Deputy Chairman, Parliamentary Group ("LDK")
- Hajdar Beqa, member, Parliamentary Group ("PDK")
- Ganimete Musliu, member, Parliamentary Group ("PDK")
- Anton Quni, member, Parliamentary Group ("LDK")
- Muharrem Nitaj, member, Parliamentary Group ("AAK")
- Sami Kurteshi, member, Parliamentary Group ("Vetëvendosje")
- Bahrim Šabani, member, Parliamentary Group ("6+")
- Dardan Molliqaj, member, Parliamentary Group ("PSD") (28.06.2018 until 02.11.2018);
- Frashër Krasniqi, member, Parliamentary Group ("PSD") from 02.11.2018 onwards.¹²⁵⁹

The commission's report regarding the case was compiled over a period of about one year, including all the stakeholders involved in this case. In an extraordinary session on 24.06.2019, the Assembly of Kosovo approved this report. The report was approved with 59 votes in favor, 2 against and 4 abstentions.¹²⁶⁰

Presenting the findings of the report, the commission chairman Xhelal Sveçla said that 31 violations were identified in the illegal deportation of the six Turkish citizens in question. Referring to the investigative report, Sveçla said that the decision to revoke residence permits in Kosovo and the order for the forced expulsion of Turkish citizens

¹²⁵⁷ Klotilda Saraçini, "Kosovë- Komision Hetimor Parlamentar për Rastin e Dëbimit të 6 Shtetasve Turq", 05.04.2018, <https://ata.gov.al/2018/04/05/kosove-komision-hetimor-parlamentar-per-rastin-e-debimit-te-6-shtetasve-turq/>, [15.09.2020].

¹²⁵⁸ "Kuvendi Formon Komisionin Hetimor për Deportimin e 6 Shtetasve Turq", **Zeri**, <https://zeri.info/aktuale/205204/kuvendi-formon-komisionin-hetimor-per-deportimin-e-6-shtetasve-turq/>, [15.09.2020].

¹²⁵⁹ **Ibid.**

¹²⁶⁰ "Kuvendi Miratoi Raportin për Rastin e Dëbimit të Shtetasve Turq", **Flaka**, 24.06.2019, <https://flaka.com.mk/kuvendi-miratoi-raportin-per-rastin-e-debimit-te-shtetasve-turq/>, [15.09.2020].

were contrary to the laws and Constitution of Kosovo and international conventions.¹²⁶¹

Sveçla stressed that:

“Regarding the operation to deport six Turkish citizens, [there] are noted a long series of violations, irregularities and inconsistencies with applicable laws and bylaws, as well as constitutional and international human rights standards. In the report we submitted, we identified 31 violations, which are already known, as well as a list of recommendations for the Assembly of Kosovo.¹²⁶² It should also be noted that in the framework of these violations, decisions on revocation of residence permits and orders for forced removal were issued illegally, and this is confirmed by the decision of the Basic Court in Prishtina, the Administrative Department, which annulled these decisions”.¹²⁶³

Meanwhile, the deputy of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) Driton Selmanaj said that:

“This event is the most obvious case of violation of any norm and legal and constitutional provisions by state authorities.” According to Selmanaj, the State Prosecutor's Office, courts and some important departments from the Ministry of Internal Affairs were left out in this event. He stressed that during the operation, the Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA) exceeded its competences by carrying out these police authorizations. Although he said that in the report there is no evidence to claim that the order was given by President Hashim Thaçi, MP Selmanaj attributed this responsibility to the president. He also said that during the interview, they encountered inconsistencies in statements and false testimony from the former Kosovo Police Chief/now KIA Chief, Shpend Maxhuni. They encountered similar from former KIA Chief Driton Gashi regarding whether the Chief of Police was aware of the operation or not.”¹²⁶⁴

Even the deputy of Vetëvendosje Movement, Glauk Konjufca, described President Thaçi as responsible for this case, by calling him as "the conductor of this serious event". According to MP Konjufca, "this scandalous and illegal deportation", in addition to

¹²⁶¹ **Ibid.**

¹²⁶² Among the basic violations that paved the way for the deportation of 6 Turkish citizens was the revocation of their residence permits, and the failure to give the right for complain. The Law on Foreigners in Kosovo stipulates that to everyone whose residence permit in Kosovo is revoked has the right to appeal. This was denied to the 6 Gulenists that were deported in Turkey. According to Article 6 of the Law on Foreigners, it is stated that the Kosovo Intelligence Agency determines whether foreign nationals, for reasons of state security, should have their residence permit revoked. And according to the article referred to by the Ministry of Interior, citizens whose residence permit is revoked have the right to complain in Kosovo. But this was not allowed to the 6 Gulenists. Point 3 of Article 6 of the Law on Foreigners provides that a foreigner has the right to appeal to a court against the decision of Kosovo institutions, was stressed in Gazeta Express. “Gjashtë Gylenistët u Dërguan Jashtëligjshëm nga Kosova në Turqi”. **Insajderi**, <https://insajderi.com/gjashte-gylenistet-u-derguan-jashteligjshem-nga-kosova-ne-turqi/>, [15.09.2020].

¹²⁶³ “Kuvendi Miratoi Raportin”, [15.09.2020].

¹²⁶⁴ **Ibid.**

directly affecting the functioning of the law and the level of democracy and relations between institutions, also damaged Kosovo in the international context.¹²⁶⁵

To contrast, Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) deputy Hajdar Beqaj said that they are interested in this case being clarified, but there was criticism for the report, which he called unreliable. According to Beqaj, the interpretations in the report were made selectively for political and personal interests by members of the commission. He also said that it cannot be concluded that the KIA exceeded its competences, adding that the report does not have the power it should have and that: "It does not help the judiciary, but only complicates their work." He also replied to Selmanaj, saying that there is no evidence that makes President Hashim Thaçi responsible for giving the order for the operation.¹²⁶⁶

The epilogue of this case from the perspective of Kosovo was materialized by the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo filing criminal charges against 22 police officer to the Special Prosecution, as a result of their implication in the deportation of six Turkish nationals in March 2018.¹²⁶⁷ The Special Prosecution Office confirmed that: "They have accepted the report from Police Inspectorate of Kosovo, but have failed to provide any information regarding the nature of the allegations made against the Kosovo's police officers."¹²⁶⁸ The answer of the Special Prosecution of Kosovo was that this institution has received, "a criminal report from the Kosovo Police Inspectorate against the 22 suspects, and they are also interviewing other defendants".¹²⁶⁹ After the review of the report issued by IPK, the Special Prosecution of Kosovo will take a decision to initiate or not their investigations regarding this charges.¹²⁷⁰

From Turkey's perspective, the indictment against the six deported members of FETÖ was initially filed by the Istanbul Prosecutor who charged all six Gulenists with "running an armed terrorist organization" and "international espionage," calling for jail sentences

¹²⁶⁵ **Ibid.**

¹²⁶⁶ **Ibid.**

¹²⁶⁷ Arton Konushevci, "Kallëzim Penal Ndaj 22 Policëve për Dëbimin e Shtetasve Turq", **Radio Evropa e Lire**, 15.08.2019, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/shtetasit-turq-debimi/30111218.html>, [16.08.2020].

¹²⁶⁸ "22 Police Staff Implicated in 'Gulenist' Deportation Case", **Prishtina Insight**, 16.08.2018, <https://prishtinainsight.com/22-police-staff-gulenist-deportation-case/>, [16.09.2020].

¹²⁶⁹ **Ibid.**

¹²⁷⁰ **Ibid.**

of between 16 years and six months and 28 years.¹²⁷¹ The Courts in Turkey have sentenced the six "gulenists" deported from Kosovo to 56 years, seven months, and two weeks in prison. Four teachers of the “Mehmet Akif” high school in Kosovo and a doctor were sentenced to approximately 8 years, while the head of the “Gulistan” NGO administering the school, Mustafa Erdem was sentenced to 15 years in prison.¹²⁷²

Throughout this entire process, from the beginning of the operation to the end of the trial, the Western international community, including the EU, the USA, and various international organizations, expressed their reactions and criticisms.

The European Union reacted after the arrest. EU spokesperson Maja Kocijancic raised doubts about the process related to the deportation of the Gülenists. As for Turkey, Kocijancic stressed that the EU recognizes the need to bring to justice those responsible for the July 15 coup attempt, but that any allegations of wrong doing must be subject to due process and internationally recognized norms when extradition is requested.¹²⁷³ Angelina Eichhorst, the EU’s head for the Western Balkans and Turkey, also stressed that institutions of Kosovo have to “full respect the rule of law and international extradition rules”.¹²⁷⁴ Rebecca Harms, Foreign Affairs spokesperson and expert on Turkey in the European Parliament's Green Group, has called on the EU to grant political asylum and protection to members of the Gülen Movement who are targeted by autocratic President Erdoğan and the Turkish Government. “The EU must ensure that EU member states react together by offering political asylum to the Gülenists and ensure

¹²⁷¹ “Turkish Court Hands Kosovo Deportees Heavy Jail Sentences”, **Balkan Insight**, 07.11.2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/07/turkish-court-hands-kosovo-deportees-heavy-jail-sentences/>, [16.09.2020].

¹²⁷² “Turkey Courts Sentence Six ‘Gulenists’ Deported from Kosovo to 56 Years in Prison”, **Exit News**, 11.08.2020, <https://exit.al/en/2020/08/11/turkey-courts-sentence-six-gulenists-deported-from-kosovo-to-56-years-in-prison/>, [15.09.2020].

¹²⁷³ “BE: Arrestimi i Qytetarëve Turq në Kosovë Paraqet Veprim Arbitrar”, **Idividi**, 04.04.2018, <http://www.idividi.com.mk/shqip/balkan/1182344/index.html>, [16.09.2020].

¹²⁷⁴ “The Latest: EU criticizes Kosovo's deportation of 6 Turks”, **National Post**, 05.04.2018, <https://nationalpost.com/pmnn/news-pmn/the-latest-eu-criticizes-kosovos-deportation-of-6-turks>, [16.09.2020].

that there are no states within the EU that are with Erdogan's Turkey,” she wrote in a letter sent to Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn.¹²⁷⁵

Journalist Valeria Mingardi, an expert on Balkan issues, claims that the current issues that are taking place in the Western Balkans are also highly relevant for the European Union. According to Mingardi if these states are pressured to abandon the path to democracy and the rule of law, enlargement will be enormously threatened. Also she stress that the connections between President Erdoğan and the leaders of this region are jeopardizing its accession process to the Union, which is already complicated by some problematic bilateral relations. This possibility is more and more likely, as President Erdoğan does not retire soon with his ambitions regarding the region.¹²⁷⁶

The Director for Special Research at Freedom House Nate Schenkkan consider that the operation of Turkish intelligence to capture its citizens from a state with which it has friendly relations represents a disrespect to the international human rights standards and bilateral relations. Schenkkan emphasize that, “Turkey’s allies are once again witnessing just how Ankara values its bilateral relationships.”¹²⁷⁷

Meanwhile, USA Ambassador to Kosovo Greg Delawie reacted after the arrest and deportation. Delawie wrote on the social network Twitter that he is following the latest events and that transparency and the rule of law are vital for Kosovo.¹²⁷⁸ The USA Embassy issued a statement stating that they were satisfied with the establishment of the investigative commission which discovered legal violations related to this incident. The USA Embassy also stressed that:

“The findings of the commission, which suggest 31 legal or procedural violations by the Kosovo Intelligence Agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other institutions, raise concerns about

¹²⁷⁵ “Harms Kërkon Bllokimin e Kosovës në BE Pas Arrestimit të Gylenistëve”, **Gazeta Infokus**, 03.04.2018, <https://gazetainfokus.com/harms-kerkon-bllokimin-e-kosoves-ne-pas-arrestimit-te-gylenistevce/>, [16.09.2020].

¹²⁷⁶ Valeria Mingardi, “Europa También se Enfrenta a la ‘Crisis de Erdogan’ en los Balcanes Occidentales”, **Pro Derechos**, 05.06.2018, <http://proderechos.org/opinion-europa-tambien-se-enfrenta-a-la-crisis-de-erdogan-en-los-balcanes-occidentales/>, [17.09.2020].

¹²⁷⁷ Nate Schenkkan, “Turkey Just Snatched Six of its Citizens From Another Country”, **Washington Post**, 01.04.2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/04/01/turkey-just-snatched-six-of-its-citizens-from-another-country/?noredirect=on>, [18.09.2020].

¹²⁷⁸ “Ambasadori Amerikan Reagon për Rastin e Arrestimit të Shtetasve Turq”, **Insajderi**, <https://insajderi.org/ambasadori-amerikan-reagon-per-rastin-e-arrestimit-te-shtetasve-turq/>, [18.09.2020]

fraud by the side of the main security agencies, as well as the sensitivity of the security sector to political manipulation.”¹²⁷⁹

The USA also called on Kosovo's authorities to provide full liability for everyone who do not respect the laws, and also to remind Kosovo leaders that security institutions have to act only within their constitutional authority.¹²⁸⁰

Among those who reacted was the international organization Human Rights Watch. Todor Gardos, a researcher on Eastern Europe and the Balkans, said that the organization asks Kosovo's institutional leaders to launch an investigation and explain how Turkish citizens were deported to Turkey, a place where they could face "torture".¹²⁸¹ According to Human Rights Watch:

“Kosovo's decision to arrest six Turkish citizens and hand them over to the Turkish authorities shows disregard for human rights and the rule of law. After the suspected arrest, the persons were sent to the state, where they risk facing torture. The president of Kosovo, the prime minister and the speaker of parliament, who claim that they were not aware of the operation, should request an investigation and show how this event happened”.¹²⁸²

A separate working group of the UN Human Rights Council has found violations in the deportation. Within its report, the working group has concluded that violations have been found in this operation and they demand the release of convicts and urged Kosovo institutions "to guarantee compensation and other reparations in accordance with international law." This group also asked the countries involved in this case to inform about the steps they have taken during this operation.¹²⁸³

4.3. Concluding Remarks

Ahmet Davutoğlu's departure from the JDP somehow marked a shift in Turkish foreign policy approach. The period in which Davutoğlu was in the position of foreign minister

¹²⁷⁹ “Ambasada Amerikane Kërkon Përgjegjësi për Rastin e Dëbimit të Shtetasve Turq”, **Bota Sot**, 11.03.2019, <https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/1046871/ambasada-amerikane-kerkon-pergjegjesi-per-rastin-e-debimit-te-shtetasve-turq/>, [16.09.2020].

¹²⁸⁰ **Ibid.**

¹²⁸¹ “HRW Kërkon Hetim Lidhur me Deportimin e Shtetasve Turq”, **Lajmi**, 31.03.2018, <https://lajmi.net/hrw-kerkon-hetim-lidhur-me-deportimin-e-shtetasve-turq/>, [17.09.2020].

¹²⁸² Maria Antonia Sanchez-Vallejo, “Erdogan Refuerza su Influjo en los Balcanes Tras Lograr la Entrega de Seis Turcos de Kosovo”, **El País**, 01.04.2018, https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/04/01/actualidad/1522607746_874848.html, [17.09.2020].

¹²⁸³ “Kosova Hesht, OKB i Sugjeron Dëmshpërblim për 6 Shtetasit e Dëbuar Turq”, **Kallxo**, <https://kallxo.com/lajm/kosova-hesht-okb-i-sugjeron-demshperblim-per-6-shtetasit-e-debuar-turq/>, [17.09.2020].

and later prime minister was characterized by an active approach to regional-global engagements through elements of soft power such as economic investments, mediation attempts, active access of Turkish official organizations, civil society, cultural activities, etc. Turkey focused on articulating the elements mentioned above in its close regions such as the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans.

The international environment as well as Turkey's capacity of that period, it seems created a conviction to be a regional leader, working towards the establishment of peace, prosperity and stability in these regions and the creation of a new "Pax Otomana", which was characteristic for the period of the Ottoman Empire. Academic and political circles described this approach of the JDP led by Davutoğlu as Neo-Ottomanism.

However, Turkey's ambitions for regional protagonism by promoting peace and stability in its surrounding regions were reduced as a result of the appearance on the scene of the threat to Turkey's national security, both externally and internally. The Arab Spring in the Middle East, the emergence of terrorist organizations such as ISIS, YPG / PYD, the refugee crisis and the struggle with the FETÖ network, were issues that Turkey needed to resolve.

That is to say, Turkey faced with several security threats, from the Middle East to Europe.¹²⁸⁴ In a word, the period after 2015 marked the reset of the priorities within foreign policy, or more specifically in the expression came the resecuritization of foreign policy, which was characteristic for Turkish foreign policy of the 1990s.

It should not be minimized the fact that in this period drastic changes took place both within the JDP leadership and in the Turkish political system. Davutoğlu's departure from the JDP and the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential one significantly strengthened Erdoğan's position in the state apparatus, without excluding foreign policy too. This process also had repercussion in foreign policy decision-making, because now the main decision maker was president Erdoğan and his narrow circle of advisers and leaving aside institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the

¹²⁸⁴ Keyman, "A New Turkish Foreign Policy", 55.

National Security Council from this process. Scholars in the field also described this approach as a personification of Turkey's foreign policy.

This practice was perhaps further strengthened after the coup attempt in 2016, in which Erdoğan declared open front in the struggle against the FETÖ network, who were considered the main protagonists of this attempt. As a result, the main priority of Erdoğan's foreign policy in the Western Balkans was the struggle against the FETÖ network, in which the Turkish president demanded from the countries of this region the closure of institutions and the deportation of members of this structure to Turkey. It is worth noting that instead cultivating relations through institutional channels with the Western Balkan countries, Erdoğan preferred to strengthen his personal relations with the leaders of these states. And, in the struggle against FETÖ, considerable success was achieved particularly in the countries where Erdoğan have closer relations with their leaders. However, even in these countries, in order to achieve his goal, Erdoğan used diplomatic pressure but also coercive means, bearing in mind that these countries were in a "sandwich" position where on one side was Turkey, while on the other side was the western community which was openly against Erdoğan's approach to FETÖ network.

The closure of several educational institutions in Albania, the closure of a primary school in Serbia and the deportation of a Turkish citizen, as well as the capture of six Turkish citizens from Kosovo through the MIT (Turkish Secet Service) operation, are the best argument for the strategy that brought success to Erdoğan. Even during the period when we are writing the PhD thesis, diplomatic pressure from the Turkish leadership towards the countries of the Western Balkans, regarding the struggle against the FETÖ network, has not been absent at any moment.¹²⁸⁵

On the other hand, it is also worth noting that in countries where the strategy of cultivating personal relations was not expressed and where Turkey fails to conduct

¹²⁸⁵ Ani Ruci, "Çavuşoğlu: Dorëzoni Gylenistët që Jetojnë në Shqipëri", **Deutsche Welle**, 12.02.2020, <https://www.dw.com/sq/%C3%A7avu%C5%9Fo%C4%9Flu-dor%C3%ABzoni-gylenist%C3%ABt-q%C3%AB-jetojn%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri/a-52352634>, [19.09.2020]; "Visit of "Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu to North Macedonia, 15-16 July 2019", <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimizin-makedonya-yi-ziyareti.en.mfa>, [19.09.2020].

operations through the secret service, was not achieved any success in the fight against FETÖ. Concrete example can be mention Germany, where Turkey requests the closure of FETÖ schools and the extradition of members of this network, but the relevant authorities of this country encounter negative responses emphasizing that there is no evidence and arguments to close these schools or extradition of these persons.¹²⁸⁶



¹²⁸⁶ Schartz von der Mark, “Deri ku Arrin Dora e Zgjatur e Erdoganit?”, **Deutsche Welle**, 30.07.2016, <https://www.dw.com/sq/deri-ku-arrin-dora-e-zgjatur-e-erdoganit/a-19438212>, [05.12.2020].

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze Turkey's foreign policy approach to developments in the Western Balkans region between 1990 and 2021. The end of the Cold War and the confrontation between East and West highlighted the triumph of the latter and the beginning of a new era with the USA as a single superpower in the international system. Facing with the new reality, states that were part of the Cold War, saw it as necessary to re-examine the foreign policies and their adoption in accordance with the new international system. This especially came into expression for small and medium-sized states. In the new circumstances, Turkey, as a medium size power with a considerable regional impact, after the Cold War re-examined her foreign policy in order to preserve her national interests.

Given that the areas of interaction that were limited during the Cold War were no longer valid, Turkey decided to expand its scope of action and develop an active policy in the neighboring regions around it. This especially came into expression for the regions and states that were part of the Eastern bloc, with whom Turkey during the Cold War had limited or no interaction. From 1990s, Turkey began to establish bilateral relations with Turkic states, with the countries of the Caucasus region, the Black Sea, Middle East and the Balkans. In a word, for Turkey were created the conditions for the development of a multidirectional foreign policy.

Since the sphere of interest of this study is the approach of Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkan region, from the analysis of the reasons for the active presence of Turkey in this region, it can be concluded that this region has an important weight for the foreign policy of Turkey. First, from a geostrategic perspective the Balkan region is a bridge between Turkey and the European continent. The shortest and most convenient land route for Turkey in Europe is through the Balkan transit routes. Second, from historical character, the Balkan region is a reflection and reference to the Ottoman heritage. This

region presents the indisputable argument for the presence of the Ottoman Empire on the European continent for almost five centuries. For this reason, in the elaboration of government-related organizations such as TİKA or Yunus Emre, based on their annual reports it is seen that they are actively working on projects for the preservation of the Ottoman heritage through the restoration of architectural works, promotion of literary works from the time of the Ottoman Empire, cataloging and transcription of old documents from the Ottoman Period, marking important personalities from this period, etc.

Third is the human factor. Throughout history between Turkey and the Balkan countries, people have migrated from one country to another. It is estimated that about 1 million Turks live in the Balkans and obviously Turkey has closely followed their situation and advocated for their rights. The reaction of Turkish diplomacy after the non-acceptance of the Turkish language among the official languages by UNMIK in post-war Kosovo as well as the reaction to the burning of shops and houses of Turks by Macedonian ultranationalists during the 2001 conflict in Macedonia, are among the concrete examples of care of Turkey to Turkish minorities in the Balkan countries. On the other hand there are a considerable number of people who moved from Balkans towards Turkey, and today they are in important positions within Turkish society taking an active role in businesses, associations, foundations, media, academia, politics, and military etc. These people are references in terms of relations with the Balkan countries. Having in mind this, Turkish leadership finds it difficult to stay indifferent to the developments and circumstances in the Balkan peninsula. And finally the issue of security which was especially important in the 1990s, when successive conflicts erupted in former Yugoslavia. In the conflicting circumstances of the Balkans, the interruption of the transit route from Turkey to the old continent with this also the restriction of the free movement of people and goods, the emergence of the refugee crisis where a considerable number of people took refuge in Turkey as well as the possible disappearance of the Turkish minority in the Balkan conflicts during the 1990's, were realities that seriously affected the security and national interests of Turkey.

Since the early 1990s Turkey has been closely following the implications which the states of Balkan region were facing, specifically the Yugoslavia. In fact, on the one hand, this period expanded the horizon of Turkish action in the Balkan region, but on the other hand, it was not a good start of Turkish activism in this region, considering that this period marked the beginning of the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia. But, Turkey this time took a more participatory approach by abandoning the policy of non-involvement in regional issues.

In the early stages of the Yugoslavia disintegration process, Turkey's initial stance was towards supporting the sovereignty and integrity of Yugoslavia. But, the determination of the constituent republics for independence from the federation, made known to all relevant actors of the international community that there was no possibility for survival of the federation. The USA as the only superpower of the time followed by the countries of the European Community were the first to decide to recognize Croatia and Slovenia as independent states. The policy of recognizing the independence of the states of the former Yugoslav federation was also pursued by Turkey and on February 6, 1992, Turkey officially recognized the independence of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia and in August of the same year established diplomatic relations with these countries.

The separation of the constituent states from the federation was not realized peacefully. A series of inter-ethnic incidents occurred in countries where the status of ethnic Serbs outside Serbia remained unsolved. Slobodan Milošević's regime's ultimate goal was the annexation of the territories inhabited by Serb minorities in the states that were part of the federation. In these circumstances conflicts were inevitable. Successive conflicts initially began in Slovenia and Croatia to continue in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Regarding the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the greatest attention of Turkish foreign policy was in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

In the initial conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia, Turkey suggested that the internal affairs be resolved peacefully. But when the war broke out in Bosnia and the situation escalated, the Turkish leadership was sensitized towards taking an active diplomatic approach within the international community in order to help prevent the conflict. First

diplomatic initiatives that Turkey took regarding the Bosnian issue were the organization of an extraordinary meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on June 17-18, 1992. In this meeting, fifteen foreign ministers of OIC states by consensus voted to urge the United Nations to take concrete steps, including military campaign against the Serbs. Two months later, in August 1992, Turkish diplomats proposed an "Action Plan" for BiH to the ambassadors of the UN Security Council. The ultimate goal of this action plan was to find a peaceful solution that would end the conflict, or if no peaceful agreement could be reached, the Security Council would give the green light for military operation. Turkey's proposal was not accepted by the international western community represented by USA and European states such as Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy etc., because they were still not ready to intervene in the Bosnian conflict, and Turkey itself lacked the capacity to implement the plan alone, and therefore this plan proposal became useless. Another initiative taken by Turkey was the Balkan Conference organized in Istanbul on November 25, 1992. Participants in this conference were the vast majority of Balkan countries. Through this conference the aim was to convey a message to the international community that in case dialogue fails to have any effect on the conflict in BiH, military intervention should be the next probable tool, that would come to the expression. Also during this conference was highlighted the possibility of spillover effect of this conflict, which could cause even more serious consequences.

Meanwhile Turkey had a successful diplomatic effort mediating between Croats and Bosnians, after the Croat-Bosnian War which lasted one and a half year, more exactly from October 1992 to February 1994. This war is often named as a "war within a war" as part of the Bosnian War. Turkey's attempt to mediate these talks proved successful, because the both communities called ceasefire in February of 1994. USA saw this momentum as an opportunity to intensify negotiations for reconciliation between the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, aiming to establish a balance of military forces against Yugoslav People's Army. This diplomatic initiative was successful and both parties signed an agreement for the establishment of a Croat-Bosniak federation in March of 1994.

Turkey continued to further her diplomatic agenda, where the Turkish Prime Minister, Tansu Çiller, and her Pakistani counterpart, Benazir Butto, visited Sarajevo in February of 1994 in order to express solidarity with innocent civilians and to spread important message to the world that human rights must be protected and not be allowed to be violated by Serbian aggression.

Turkey during this period, more exactly on June 18th, 1994 deployed around 1450 military troops in the United Nations peacekeeping forces in BiH.

At the moment when the western international community led by the USA saw that the massacres of Bosnian civilians were not stopping, through NATO they initiated the Operation Deliberate Force in concert with the UNPROFOR to counterbalance the military power of the Yugoslav People's Army. Turkish aircrafts were not part of the military operation, but contributed with providing air cover for the planes carrying out the bombing. This operation was determinant tool to pressure the leadership of Yugoslavia to sit in the negotiation table and later on on November 1995 to reach the Dayton Agreement.

Regarding the Dayton Agreement, the Turkish leadership has had an impact on the Bosnian side's acceptance of the agreement. Concrete example are the talks in Ankara in September 1995, between U.S.Vice Foreign Minister Richard Holbrooke, BiH President Alija Izetbegović and Foreign Minister Muhammet Šakirbey. Holbrooke, through the mediation of Turkish leadership, aimed to convince the BiH leadership to be more cooperative in reaching the peace accord.

In addition to diplomatic attempts to help find a solution that would stop the war, Turkey helped the Bosnian army by secretly supplying it with weapons. Turkey took such a step because on September 25, 1991 the UN passed the Security Council Resolution number 713 which enacted an arms embargo on Yugoslavia for all kind of distribution of weapons and military equipment. According to the Turkish leadership the UN decision to place a weapons embargo was not correct because it was more detrimental for the Bosnian side, considering the Serbs had access to the remaining weapons of the Yugoslav National Army (In Serbian: Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija). For that reason

at the summit of the OIC held in Karachi - Pakistan, on April 1993, Turkey with other OIC member states formulated a joint proposal for lifting the arms embargo against BiH. The proposal was accepted by all states present at the Summit, after which the OIC member states requested upon the UNSC to take concrete measures as soon as possible. This call was not taken into consideration by UN, and the only way to balance the forces on the ground was secretly providing weapons to the Muslim Bosnian army. In this direction Turkey and other states with Muslim majority populations as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, were the states which mostly contributed to the supply of weapons and the necessary munitions to the Bosnian army. This was later confirmed by senior Turkish and Bosnian military officials.

This activism, first of all diplomatic but also military, was a evidence to Turkey's active foreign policy approach during the Bosnian war. In fact the conflict in Bosnia was the first serious challenge that Turkey demonstrated its disposition to take active part in regional developments.

In addition to active approach to the Bosnian conflict, during this period Turkey developed her relations with states of the Balkan region such as Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Albania. Especially with Macedonia and Albania, the intensity of relations was at the highest level. Apart reciprocal visits of state delegations, between Turkey and these two countries were signed cooperation agreements in various fields, especially in the military field where Turkey provided educational, logistical support and supply of military equipment for the military personnel of these countries. Turkey was positioned on the side of Macedonia in the problem that Macedonia had with Greece over the constitutional name. While to Albania, Turkey offered support for membership in international organizations. In this regard, among the first memberships of Albania in regional organizations was the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Turkey has played a great role for Albania's admission in BSEC.

Meanwhile, one of the greatest diplomatic successes during the early 1990s was the foundation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the founder of which was Turkey. The purpose of the BSEC is to develop economic cooperation between member countries and other states and to improve the business climate for enterprises and

companies, always in the spirit of friendship, dialogue and mutual respect. The establishment of the BSEC has created the opportunity to establish economic links between the two continents (Europe and Asia) as well as three different regions - the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Black Sea. By the 13 member states, 5 are from the Balkan region. The last country to integrate into the BSEC was Macedonia in 2020.

While with the signing of the Dayton Accords in 1995, it seemed that the "troubled waters" in the Balkans began to calm down, but an internal chaos in 1997 gripped Albania as a result of the collapse of several fraudulent pyramid schemes. In the lack of the capacity to restore order and peace within the state, the Albanian government sought help from the international community to overcome the crisis. On March 28, 1997, UN Security Council adopted resolution no. 1101 through which was established the multinational peacekeeping force called "Operation Alba. In the operation "Alba" Turkey participated with 900 peacekeeping troops. Their command was in Zall-Herr. The mission of Turkish soldiers was focused on the protection of the airport of Rinas, the western area of Tirana and the road axis up to Burrel. Apart of this, Turkish peacekeeping troops were active in establishing order and security, in order Albanian state to be ready in preparing the early parliamentary elections in June 1997. Turkey continued to contribute to Albania even after the establishment of peace and stability by the peacekeeping troops. One of the most important projects was the establishment of the Naval Academy Forces of Albania, the reconstruction of the Maritime Naval Base of Pashalimani and the activation of the shipyard.

While the last station of the Milošević regime in an attempt to expand the territory of Serbia was Kosovo. Kosovo was the second place after Bosnia and Herzegovina to experience the greatest repercussions from Milosevic's paramilitary forces. The war in Kosovo took place between the Yugoslav Army's military police, and paramilitary forces against the Kosovo Liberation Army during 1998-1999. Given the past experiences of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, especially in BiH, the western countries headed by USA has been following closely the events taking place in Kosovo. To prevent another humanitarian catastrophe, a series of diplomatic attempts were made

to end the conflict in Kosovo, but failed as a result of Milošević's regime's lack of cooperation.

Turkey was among those countries that even in this conflict made its diplomatic efforts to help in preventing the escalation of the conflict.

During the Kosovo War, in an attempt to help in finding a satisfactory solution for both parties, Turkey has held meetings with various parties in the region but also has been active on international platforms dealing with the Kosovo issue. Among them can be distinguished the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem in March 1998 in Serbia, who on the one hand expressed the concerns of the Turkish government about the danger of this conflict which could threaten the security and stability of the region, while on the other hand Cem proposed the implementation of the education agreement reached in 1996 between Milošević and Rugova. This proposal was not taken into account by Milošević, on the contrary, the bloodshed in Kosovo continued even further. After his visit to Serbia, Cem also attended in the meeting of the Contact Group in Bonn, Germany on March 25, 1998. Cem suggested the creation of a Balkan Peacekeeping Force which would act if the situation in Kosovo escalated. This proposal of the Turkish minister was not taken into consideration by the other members of the meeting, but a year later it was Cem's proposal that came to expression when NATO took initiatives to end the suffering of the Albanian people of Kosovo. While the conflict in Kosovo was still going on, Turkey together with the countries of the Balkan region discussed the issue of Kosovo in the events such as the Balkan summit in Antalya on April 16-17, 1998; the international meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the South East European Countries held on June 8-9, 1998 in Istanbul and the Summit of the South-Eastern European Countries' Heads of States and Governments held on October 12-13, 1998, in Antalya. The messages conveyed by these events were that the violent conflict in Kosovo should be stopped immediately and a lasting solution should be found within the framework of the UN resolutions. In addition to active diplomacy at both the bilateral level as well as regional and international platforms, Turkey through its humanitarian diplomacy has played an important role in providing assistance to a large number of Kosovo refugees in Albania and Macedonia through the Red Crescent but also by

providing shelter to refugees in Kırklareli to the refugee camp “Gaziosmanpaşa. For this action, Turkey received recognition from the international community.

Meanwhile, after a series of diplomatic attempts by the international community to end the war in Kosovo failed, especially after Milošević's resistance to sign the Rambouillet agreement, the last option was NATO's military operation "Allied Force", which ended the aggression of Serbian forces. During the NATO military operation, Turkey participated with F-16 fighter jets and also in case of ground operations by NATO they were ready to provide a battalion of a mechanized unit and with an armored unit. NATO's operation was successful and the war ended with the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement on June 9, 1999. The active approach of Turkish diplomacy continued in the post-conflict period by participating in the KFOR peacekeeping mission and advocating for the rights of the Turkish community in Kosovo.

Turkey, even in the last conflict in the geography of the former Yugoslavia, more specifically in the internal conflict in the Republic of Macedonia in 2001 between the ethnic Albanian "National Liberation Army" (NLA, a militant group) and the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia, closely followed the developments and called for finding a solution that would overcome the conflict. For this the Turkish leadership encouraged Albanians and Macedonians to work together.

The interviews that were done with senior Macedonian state officials of that time testify that the attitude of the Turkish leadership was always that a long-term and stable solution that would end this conflict could only be achieved through the mediation of NATO alliance. In addition to calls for conflict resolution through dialogue and the involvement of the international community, the government spokesman during 2000-2001 Antonio Milošoski stressed that during the 2001 conflict Turkey and Ukraine provided support to Macedonia in purchasing additional equipment and military weapons. Milošoski emphasized that this support was given with good intention in order to preserve the Macedonian territorial integrity. Apart of this, Turkey as usual, was the most suitable destination for refugees fleeing Macedonia, similar as refugees fleeing from the war of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo as well as from the internal chaos in Albania during 1997. Meanwhile, with the mediation of EU and NATO, was achieved

a compromise between the parties involved in the conflict through the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which brought a cease-fire and disarmament of the NLA.

Turkey's presence in Macedonia continued even after the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001. Namely, in the post-conflict period, Turkey's peacekeeping troops within the framework of NATO mission, participated in the Operation Essential Harvest, Amber Fox, Allied Harmony mission as well as in the EU missions Concordia, and Proxima.

From the early 1990s to 2001, it can be concluded that within Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans region, two elements that have come most to the expression were diplomacy and the military.

Through the element of diplomacy it was seen that Turkey initially established diplomatic relations with the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which had proclaimed their independence, but also began to intensify relations with Albania that had just passed into the system of liberal democracy. During the conflicts in BiH and Kosovo, the efforts to help find a solution in bilateral meetings with the parties involved in the conflict, at regional summits and conferences as well as the initiatives undertaken within international organizations to raise awareness of international community regarding the problems that the Balkans was facing, presents an argument for active Turkish diplomacy.

Apart from Turkey's diplomatic activism in this period, the military presence was not absent either. The Turkish army was part of NATO military operations during the conflict in BiH, as well as in Kosovo. Turkey also secretly supplied Bosnian army with weapons despite the decision for arms embargo by UN Security Council. In addition, the Turkish military has participated in all post-war international peacekeeping missions in the countries of the former Yugoslavia such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia as well as in Albania in 1997.

From the above elaboration it can be concluded that the priority reason that obliged Turkey to have an active approach to the conflicts and crises in the Balkans during the 1990s was the issue of security and protection of national interests. This means that, in

case of a larger-scale conflict, there was a real possibility of the arrival of a large wave of refugees from the Balkans in Turkey that could cause consequences in the social and economic contexts. The second, has to do with the interruption of the transit routes of the Balkans, that would cause damage to both Turkish businesses and the free movement of people between Turkey and Europe. And third, in case that Ottoman heritage would be destroyed in the Balkan region, there is a big risk of complete marginalization of Turkey from the European continent. The Ottoman heritage is evidence of the presence of Turks in the "old continent". These reasons stimulated Turkey to have active approach in conflict resolutions in this region.

It is also worth noting that both in recognizing the independence of the states that emerged from the former Yugoslavia, as well as during the conflict resolution process, including military operations, Turkey's foreign policy was convergent with that of the Western international community led by the USA. This convergence will continue during the first decade of the 21st century in terms of supporting the countries of the Western Balkans for their integration into NATO.

Meanwhile, the early 2000s marked the end of coalition governments in Turkey and the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party as the sole ruling party. JDP gave a new approach to Turkish foreign policy in general and in particular in the Western Balkans with the inclusion of new elements of action, which were different from those of the 1990s.

The post-conflict period of the Balkans for the JDP presented an opportunity which it did not just capitalize on the active diplomacy of the previous Turkish governments of the 1990s, but also included new elements such as economic investments, conflict resolution and mediation processes, active approach of civil society, support of educational and cultural institutions, etc. Through these elements, the JDP's goal was to make Turkey an important regional factor with global ambitions.

While the first phase of Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans is considered to be the period of the 1990s, the second, third and fourth phases have been led and implemented by the JDP from 2002 until today (2021). So the second phase of Turkish

foreign policy under JDP is considered to be from 2002 until 2009, when Ahmet Davutoğlu becomes Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During this phase, two components that have underlined Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans are the intensification of Turkey's bilateral meetings with the Western Balkan countries under the framework of Euro-integration processes, and the second element has to do with increasement of Turkish investment.

Regarding the Euro-Integration process from Turkey's perspective the JDP continued the EU integration path of previous governments of the 1990s, but with greater intensity. In short, Turkey as a candidate country tried to fit both domestic and foreign policy with the EU. On the other hand, in the same period, the countries of the Western Balkans that emerged from the post-conflict period aimed integration into both the EU and NATO.

It should be noted that in addition to the will of these countries towards EU integration, much more important was the atmosphere or climate within the EU in terms of enlargement. During the early 2000s, the largest enlargements of the EU with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe took place. Thus, the integration process of Turkey and the countries of the Western Balkans coincided with the policy of EU enlargement. With the change of this policy, and the emergence of the EU "fatigue" from the enlargement process, the integration process slowed down for both Turkey and the countries of the Western Balkans. To this day these countries are waiting at the gates of the EU.

During the analysis of this period it can be said that in all meetings of the Turkish leadership with the leaders of the Western Balkan countries was expressed open support for the integration process, emphasizing that they are ready to offer help, particularly in terms of integration in NATO, given that Turkey is among the most relevant states within alliance. This also was confirmed during interviews with the former Macedonian politicians who stressed that in addition to the US, Turkey has made constant advocacy for the integration of the Western Balkan countries into NATO.

On the other hand, Turkey was of the stance that her integration into the EU would be more applicable in case of cooperation and exchange of experiences regarding the

integration process with the countries of the Western Balkans. Turkish leadership also saw a greater chance of EU integration if it manages to enter into an enlargement package with Western Balkans. But none of Turkey's EU integration projections were realized, as a result of blocking the negotiating chapters by some member states.

The second element which was priority in the Turkey-Western Balkans relations was the economic cooperation, more exactly the economic investments. The Western Balkan countries that emerged from the conflicts of the 1990s were "hungry" for foreign investment. In this regard, Turkey was a potential country for them which could influence their potential businessmen to invest in this region. And not coincidentally, in all bilateral meetings during this period, the Turkish leadership took with her delegation of powerful businessmen from Turkey to see the area as well as to check investment opportunities. And it can be said that since the JDP came to power, Turkish investments in the Balkan countries have significantly increased. Today, Turkish investors in the Balkans are present in various sectors such as telecommunications, textiles, food products, construction, airports, banking sector, etc. According to the statistics of the Turkish Ministry of Economy, the cumulative amount of Turkish direct investment in the Balkan countries in 2007 was \$ 3.5 billion while 10 years later, more exactly by the end of 2016 reached about \$ 10 billion. This shows that Turkey has strengthened its economic relations with the states of Balkan region in terms of investment.

During this period two new countries declared their independence. The first was Montenegro, which formally declared its independence on June 3, 2006. Turkey recognized Montenegro as a sovereign and independent state on June 12, 2006 and one month later on July 3, 2006 established diplomatic relations with this country. Even for Montenegro, Turkey has strongly expressed its support towards integration in the EU and NATO. This was emphasized by the Turkish delegations during their official visits to Montenegro. In addition, Turkey in 2007 Turkey opened TIKa office in Podgorica through which provided significant funds across Montenegro to improve conditions in schools, hospitals, infrastructure, as well as in the cultural field.

Meanwhile after Montenegro, Kosovo was the second country to declare its independence on February 17, 2008, marking the final chapter in the dismemberment of

the former Yugoslavia, a process that lasted 17 years. After the declaration of independence, Kosovo was immediately recognized by a good number of important states of the Western international community such as United States, Great Britain, Italy, France, Turkey, and many other countries. In contrast, Russia aligned with Serbia in opposing independence. To this day, Kosovo's independence is opposed by Serbia, calling it illegitimate, by the fact that the Serbian leadership still considers Kosovo as a province of Serbia.

Apart of establishing diplomatic and ambassadorial relations with Kosovo on the same day after the recognition of independence, Turkey was among the important supporters for Kosovo's international subjectivity and for this purpose actively has lobbying in international organizations such as OIC or UN for the recognition of the independence of Kosovo. Turkey's commitment to new recognitions of Kosovo has been praised by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo Skender Hyseni emphasizing Turkey's big role in the recognizing Kosovo by 116 countries so far. Concrete examples of Turkey's direct involvement in lobbying for Kosovo recognition was the case with Pakistan and Brunei. When Pakistan decided to recognize Kosovo, they informed Kosovar leadership through Turkey of their decision. Brunei also submitted their decision to recognize Kosovo on April 25, 2012, shortly after the king returned home after a visit to Ankara. In addition to lobbying in the international community, Turkey has also made her diplomatic service available to Kosovo, meaning that all Turkish embassies are available to Kosovo without any conditions, not only to Kosovo officials but also for its citizens.

Turkey was in the same line with the USA and EU countries even during the recognition of Kosovo. This means that in addition to kinship, cultural and historical factors, strategic interest was decisive in the recognition of Kosovo's independence by Turkey. First, Turkey was positioned alongside the western community states led by the USA who was the main "sponsor" of Kosovo's independence. Secondly, the JDP leadership applied Davutoğlu's suggestions quoted in "Strategic Depth", regarding the empowerment of the position of Albanians in the Balkan region. Davutoğlu in Strategic Depth emphasize that the most important element of Turkey's political impact in the Balkan region are peoples that belong to the religious affiliation of Islam as Ottoman

remnants. In particular he refers to the Albanian and Bosnian people. Davutoğlu emphasizes that among the main objectives of Turkey in this region is the empowerment of Bosnians and Albanians within a stable structure. In this context, supporting Muslim population in the Balkan region is vitally important for Turkey to fulfill its foreign policy goals.

Meanwhile, the decisions by EU member states to block negotiating chapters fade away Turkey's ambitions for the European integration process. Additionally the global financial crisis in 2008 that gripped the USA in the first place but also the EU countries, began to signal the fading of the primacy of the USA superpower and the emergence of new great powers in the international system. The world began to transition to a multipolar system. Given such circumstances, Turkish leadership seems to have seen the right time to pursue an independent foreign policy, especially in her close regions. The booster of this approach is considered to be Ahmet Davutoğlu. The period in which Davutoğlu is appointed in the position of foreign minister (2009) and later as prime minister (2014-2016), was considered as the third phase of Turkey's foreign policy characterized by an active approach to regional-global engagements through reinforcing the economic investments and incorporating tools like mediation attempts, active approach of Turkish official agencies/ organizations, civil society, cultural activities, etc. In this regard it should not leave aside Davutoğlu's discourse of "zero problem with neighbors" which as the ultimate goal had the elimination of all the problems with neighbors or at least to minimize them as much as possible, in line with a win- win approach through peaceful means.

In addition to economic investments, which continued after 2009, Turkey initially managed to re-establish relations with Serbia, through the first visit by a Turkish president after 23 years. The visit was paid by Turkish President Abdullah Gül in October 2009. During the visit, the leadership of both countries emphasized that despite many disagreements in the past, they see their future in the spirit of understanding and friendship. In addition to signing several agreements such as Economic Cooperation Agreement, Cooperation Agreement on Transport Infrastructure, Social Security Agreement etc, during this visit was organized a business forum attended by

businessmen from leading Turkish companies in the field of construction, textile, tourism and other areas. However, the most important element of this meeting can be considered the discussion towards stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where both countries stressed that the prosperity of the Balkans goes through the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In fact, this breakthrough in relations between Turkey and Serbia paved the way for the initiation of one of Turkey's most successful projects in the Western Balkans region, which was the establishment of a tripartite mechanism between Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia.

In the political context, the normalization of relations between BiH and Serbia, the intensification of Turkey's relations with Serbia and BiH, frequent visits of state delegations, Istanbul Declaration at the first trilateral summit at the level of presidents that cemented the sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH, Ahmet Davutoğlu's influence toward Serbian leadership for the adoption by the Serbian parliament the "Declaration of Srebrenica", Turkey's diplomatic involvement in finding a formula for Kosovo and Serbia's participation in EU-Western Balkans summit on June 2, 2010 in Sarajevo. After that, two another summits were organized in Karadorđevo (2011) and Ankara (2013) where was reaffirmed the position of BiH sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the vision regarding the prospect towards the European Union, are some of the positive political developments as a result of the trilateral mechanism. Additionally, as result of this trilateral mechanism a large number of agreements between the three countries were signed. While in terms of economy, trilateral cooperation has notably improved trade exchange among Turkey, Serbia and BiH. Serbian-Turkish trade exchange increased more than twice from \$338.9 million in 2009, increased to \$819.7 million in 2014. The trade volume between Turkey and BiH in the period 2009-2014 increased from \$278.7 to \$493.4 million. While the trade exchange between Serbia and BiH also expanded from \$1.48 to \$1.85 billion in the period between 2009-2014.

Through this initiative Turkey proved to international community that it is among the regional relevant actors that can launch initiatives with successful outcomes. The

mediation between Serbia and BiH in overcoming differences on certain issues testified the diplomatic potential that Turkey possesses. The rapprochement between two countries was not possible until Turkey's mediation through the tripartite mechanism. Turkey's involvement in this process also has shown to both the European Union countries and USA that Turkey can help in the process of stability and economic prospects of the Western Balkans.

In addition to mediation and the creation of a tripartite mechanism, another tool that brought Turkey considerable success and visibility in the Western Balkans was the presence of organizations / agencies supported by the state of Turkey. These organizations / agencies by implementing a significant number of projects in various fields achieved to establish closer communication with citizens of these countries. Turkey was aware that if it wanted to have regional influence around her close regions, in addition to cultivating relations with state political structures also required to have close communication with their citizens. In this regard, Turkey through TIKa, Diyanet, YTB and Yunus Emre Institutes (YEI), has tried to develop relations with the citizens of the Balkan region.

Turkey through these institutions have realized a large number of projects in the social, educational, economic, cultural, religious fields. TIKa in the Balkans has managed to implement over 3500 projects with a budget expenditure of over 300 million Euros.

Yunus Emre with her activities in the field of culture has attracted attention of Balkan people. From the annual reports of YEI, comparing with other regions, the Balkans secured the leadership when it comes to the percentage of students who have expressed interest to follow the Turkish language courses in YEI. This comparison refers only to the pursuit of the Turkish language in the cultural centers of Yunus Emre. Meanwhile, English and German are the languages for which most interest is currently expressed in learning in the Balkan region. In recent years, the German language in particular is in trend. Learning German opens the door to many young people to study, work or reunite with their family in Germany.

From the annual reports of Yunus Emre, compared to other regions, the largest number of activities in cultural centers took place in the Balkan region. Also the greatest interest for attending Turkish language courses was in this region. The attractiveness for the Turkish language also can be said that come also from the Turkish soap operas that have conquered television programs in the Western Balkans.

YTB through the Turkey Scholarship program provides scholarships for international students to study in Turkey. According to YTB data, from the year 2012 until 2019, 3,895 students from the Balkan region received scholarships from the Turkey Scholarship Program. While Diyanet as an institution focused on religious issues, in the Western Balkans has contributed with the restoration and construction of new mosques, providing scholarship in the field of theology for international students, translation of Islamic religious literature into local languages, and it has even tried to mediated in certain situations such as the Sandžak case, although in this case the success of the Turkish initiative was limited.

Despite the activities carried out by these agencies / organizations, there have been certain criticisms and concerns. Criticisms addressed to these structures were on the aspect of financial transparency, considering that these institutions should have a more open approach, with the incorporation of financial list in details in their annual reports. While another concern emerged from the background of the activities that are described as "secret agendas." The biggest fear that skeptics have regarding the presence of these structures is the eventual promotion of an Islamic agenda which could lead to later consequences, including an alienation from Western values, which is not in the interest of the Western Balkan states.

This active foreign policy through the incorporation of new elements, by diplomatic and academic circles was named as a Neo-Ottomanism. In an affirmative context, the term describes a foreign policy that derives from the legitimacy as a longtime imperial power in her close regions such as the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus. At its worst, this term suggests hegemonic ulterior motives behind Turkey's new activism.

The negative connotation of the term Neo Ottomanism was highlighted even more after Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech in Sarajevo in 2009, where Davutoğlu gave weight and glorification to the Ottoman centuries in the Balkans, emphasizing that the history of Balkan region between the 16th and 19th centuries was a success story. Describing the era of the Ottoman Empire as successful, Davutoğlu stressed that just like the rise of the Ottoman Balkans in the 16th century as the epicenter of world politics, there will be an effort to do again these regions together with Turkey the center of world politics in the future. This is the goal of Turkish foreign policy. Davutoğlu's speech was widely criticized by scholars and politicians in the region, where in general terms it was described as a rhetorical-emotional speech but also as a warning of the counterbalance of EU influence in the Balkans. The most outspoken criticism of Turkey's foreign policy under Davutoğlu came from Serbian and Albanian intellectuals. Darko Tanasković former Yugoslav ambassador to Turkey and university professor, emphasized that after the speech of Davutoğlu in Sarajevo, none of the Turkish officials can change the thesis and play the "deaf phone" saying that Neo-Ottomanism does not exist. He define Neo Ottomanism as a effort of Turkey as a macro-regional power, to renew its influence in the areas that are its priority, namely the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Tanasković stresses that it is important for Serbian intellectuals and politicians to understand what Neo-Ottomanism is, to become acquainted with him, and to decide what approach to take. Meanwhile, Albanian opinionist Pirro Misha interprets the Neo-Ottomanist doctrine as a move to counterbalance EU influence in the Balkans. According to him, in the new Turkish geopolitical vision the European presence in the Balkans is an unwanted competition. He sees it as an intellectual duty to call on Albanian politicians and diplomats to respond to Turkish diplomacy that the friendship between the two countries should not be based on Neo-Ottoman nostalgia but on national interest. Among other intellectuals from the Balkans who are skeptical about Turkey's approach to the region are Mirolub Jevtić, Tatijana Lazić, Kastriot Myftaraj, Ismail Kadare, Arbana Xharra, Enver Robelli etc.

The dilemmas over the Neo Ottoman discourse went a step further after political leadership of Turkey pressured the government of Kosovo to change history textbooks of primary and secondary schools where the Ottoman Empire is described in negative

context. For this purpose the Commission for reviewing the portrayal of Ottoman and Turkish history, geography and culture in textbooks of the Republic of Kosovo, proposed the recommendations to change the parts where the Ottoman Empire is described in negative connotation and were accepted by the Kosovo's Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education emphasized that recommendations will be included in the school year of 2013-2014. The request by Turkey to review the history textbooks in Kosovo sparked reactions and debates. Especially this happened as a result of political interference in academic issues by the officials of Turkey. Some Albanian historians from Kosovo criticized Turkey's request to revise history books in parts describing the Ottoman Empire in negative terminology. According to them, this issue belongs to historians and the request of Turkish diplomats for revision of history books was not diplomatic at all. Among the historians who criticized this approach were Behxhet Shala, Jusuf Buxhovi, Frasher Demaj, Enver Rexha etc. Also a group of Albanian intellectuals prepared a petition against the revision of history under the supervision of the Turkish state. Undertaken numerous initiatives of Turkey over the last decade in Western Balkans at first sight seem to be sincere and well-intentioned, but attempts for interference in the internal affairs like this one in Kosovo, opens dilemmas on the sincerity of Turkey approach.

Neo-Ottoman approach was also debated after the emergence of the establishment of the Besa Movement as a new political force within ethnic Albanians in Macedonia with a democratic conservative background with a strong Islamic reference similar to the JDP of Turkey. The emergence of Besa Movement opened debates on Turkey's involvement, more precisely of the JDP leadership involvement in the establishment of Besa as a sister party in Macedonia. It is considered that the structure of the Besa Movement later named "Alternativa" has close ties to the JDP leadership. A report by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) for the Western Balkans confirms that the Besa Movement has entered the political arena in Macedonia, supported by Erdoğan's JDP. Frequent meetings between these two structures further increase the dilemma of the existence of a very close cooperation between them.

But, in general, apart from particular cases, during this period there was no deep crisis that may have damaged Turkey's relations with the states of this region.

During the period when Ahmet Davutoğlu was foreign minister but later also prime minister it can be said that Turkey had the "luxury" to pursue active diplomacy because the longest part of this period was characterized with a peaceful environment both within the country and in its neighboring regions.

The emergence of threat to national security both internally and externally, made that Turkey's ambitions for regional protagonism to extinguish. The Arab Spring, the Syrian refugee crisis, the emergence of terrorist organizations such as ISIS, YPG / PYD and the struggle with the FETÖ network, were issues that Turkey needed to resolve.

In parallel, faced with the threat of national security, within the JDP during the last stage of Ahmet Davutoğlu as Prime Minister, distinctive differences appeared between him and President Erdoğan. Both, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu had different views on key areas of policymaking, but the culmination rift between both happened when the JDP executive board revoked Davutoğlu's authority as a president of the JDP to appoint provincial party leaders. Following this event, on May 5, 2015, Davutoğlu resigned from the post of Prime Minister, thus paving the way for the fourth phase of foreign policy of Turkey under JDP.

Davutoğlu's departure from the JDP and the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential one, significantly strengthened Erdoğan's position in the state apparatus, without excluding foreign policy too. The foreign policy decision-making now it seems to be in the hands of the president and his narrow circle of advisers and leaving aside institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Council from this process. Scholars described this approach as a personification of Turkey's foreign policy.

Given the threats to national security, from various terrorist organizations from outside and inside, top priority of Erdoğan's foreign policy in general, was the issue of security. In a word, the post-Davutoğlu era marked the reset of the priorities within foreign

policy, or more specifically in the expression came the resecuritization of foreign policy, which was characteristic for Turkish foreign policy of the 1990s.

Regarding the Western Balkans, Erdogan's main foreign policy priority was the struggle against the FETÖ network. Turkish president demanded from all the countries of this region the closure of institutions and the deportation of members of FETÖ to Turkey, because her members pose a threat to the national security of Turkey but also to the states where they live.

In the struggle against FETÖ, considerable success was achieved in the countries where Erdoğan have personal ties with their leaders. The closure of several educational institutions in Albania, the closure of a primary school in Serbia and the deportation of a Turkish citizen, as well as the capture of six Turkish citizens from Kosovo through the MIT (Turkish Secet Service) operation, are the best argument for the strategy that brought success to Erdoğan. Even during the period when we are writing the PhD thesis, diplomatic pressure from the Turkish leadership towards the countries of the Western Balkans regarding the struggle against the FETÖ network has not been absent at any moment.

From the overall evaluation of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans region, it can be concluded that Turkey's foreign policy marks a continuation of its active approach from the beginning of the post-Cold War period to the present day. The effectiveness of Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans can be assessed by the outcomes that have emerged from Turkey's engagement during the main developments in the Western Balkans region over this thirty-year period. The good bilateral relations with all the countries of the Western Balkans, successful mediation initiatives, the participation in military operations within NATO for the prevention of conflicts in Yugoslavia, the participation in all International Peacekeeping missions in the post-conflict environments, the increase of economic investments, the initiation of a tripartite mechanism between Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, the realization of a large number of projects by the government-related organizations, the extradition of FETÖ members and the closure of some of their institutions in this region, are some of the highlighted outcomes in this study. Turkey expanded its scope of commitment and

developed an active policy by having participatory approach in all major developments in the Western Balkans and abandoning the policy of non-involvement in regional issues that was characteristic for the period of the Cold War.

Last but not least, Turkey also put forward a new concept of foreign policy based on the principles of pro active foreign policy.



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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Interviews

- Interview with Qamil Bityçi, director of Kosovo's Cultural Center in Istanbul and former secretary of the Turkish-Albanian Brotherhood Association. 15.11.2018.
- Interview with Prof. Dr. Stevo Pendarovski, former spokesperson of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2001 and member of the cabinet of two Macedonian Presidents Boris Trajkovski and Branko Crvenkovski. From May 2019 was elected as a new president of the Republic of North Macedonia. 13.02.2019.
- Interview with Prof. Dr. Vlado Bučkovski, former Minister of Defence in 2001, and prime minister of the Republic of Macedonia between 2004-2006. 03.04.2019.
- Interview with Antonio Milošoski, former spokesperson of the government of Republic of Macedonia in 2001, and former foreign minister during 2006-2011. He is currently a member of parliament from the VMRO-DPMNE party. 29.11.2019.
- Interview with Vladimir Ajzenhamer, university professor in the field of international relations at the Faculty of Security at the University of Belgrade. Professor Ajzenhamer is expert on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkan region. 07.07.2021.
- Interview with Mevludin Ibish, university professor in the field of international relations at the Faculty of Law at the International Balkan University. Professor Ibish is expert on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkan region. 12.07.2021.
- In the *"Turkey Scholarship"* subchapter, six interviews were conducted with students from 6 Western Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania) regarding their perceptions of *"Turkey Scholarship"* program, in the context of the benefits, the positive aspects of the program as well as the parts that need to be improved.