

From Imperial Geography to Everyday Geopolitics*



TESEV
FOREIGN POLICY
PROGRAMME

The paper presents the results of three meetings co-organized by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Foreign Policy Programme (FPP) and the The Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Cyprus Centre.¹ The workshops, held in Tbilisi, Istanbul and the buffer zone in Nicosia, discussed the policies followed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the former imperial geography and noted current expectations from the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus.

We as TESEV FPP believe that to some extent regional trends were reflected in the debates,

and in the discussions of expectations and concerns. One conclusion we drew from this series of workshops is that in the past ten years Turkey has truly been an effective actor in its former imperial geography. Although its influence may not please everyone, most acknowledge Turkey's foreign policy's effectiveness.

Turkey's economic, political, and cultural influence is growing in all three regions. It is undeniable that its conflict resolution-oriented approach in the Balkans has significant influence on regional policy. Turkey is also a part of different processes in the Caucasus including the rapprochement process with Armenia, good neighborly relations with Georgia and increasing cooperation with Azerbaijan in the energy field. Therefore, its policies and positions are carefully followed by the region's countries and its people. In the Middle East, or more precisely in the Arabian Basin, Turkey is a country with significant influence.

In Balkan politics, Turkey plays an active role in countries with a high potential of crisis such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Sandzak and Macedonia. Although it usually conciliates conflicting parties, Turkey does, however, occasionally embrace provocative policies. Turkey, being able to overcome its long-lasting problems with Greece and Bulgaria, is able to play a constructive role in the region. However, its effect is still limited since Turkey does not have

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¹ The first workshop was held in Tbilisi on September 2012 and included participants from Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Norway, Turkey and Cyprus. The second workshop was held in Istanbul on November 2012 with participants from the Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran, Cyprus, Norway and Turkey. The final workshop was held in the buffer zone in Nicosia, Cyprus on December 2012 and included participants from Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Turkey. During the meetings Chatham House rules were in effect; the participants were from various professions including academics, active and retired diplomats, journalists, civil society representatives and experts.

the capacities that EU has. The region is also under the supervision of international organizations and actors because of past conflicts and wars.

The room for maneuver in the Caucasus is also quite limited for Turkey. The Russian Federation is a significant power in this region and is not fond of others entering its backyard. Iran, being a neighbor to the Caspian region, also enjoys opportunities in this geography. However, most importantly, Turkey's policy towards Armenia has bound its hands and hinders its ability to develop an effective policy towards this region. If Turkey had realized the two protocols that it signed with Armenia in 2009 and normalized its relations with this country, today, without a doubt, it would have had the opportunity to implement a more effective policy in the Caucasus.

Turkey's prioritization of the short-term expectations of the Azerbaijani administration limits its impact on this region. This attitude also does not allow Turkey to protect Azerbaijan's long term interests. Currently, the Armenia-Azerbaijan-Turkey trilateral relations are intricate in a way which prompts Armenia to apply leverage on Turkey when Ankara attaches its regional policies to Baku. These policies impel Armenia to argue the occupation of Nagorno Karabakh over the injustices done to Armenians by Turkey. As long as Armenia-Turkey relations do not normalize, Armenia's occupation will continue to have legitimacy.

Turkey's political, economic, and cultural weight is felt most intensely in the Arab geography. Historical ties with the region give Turkey influence, and there is no doubt that the AKP is sympathetic in its outlook towards the Arab and Muslim geography in general. Latest policies towards this region also demonstrate that Turkey's approach is influenced by cultural and historical ties. However, it is actually wider

regional or global events that have propelled Turkey into a position of increasing influence on the region.

The 9/11 attacks were a catalyst for new U.S. and European policies in the region, and the AKP, which came to power with claims to deepen democracy, was soon presented as a model for Muslim countries. Former U.S. President George W. Bush, who visited Turkey in June 2004, gave a symbolic speech in front of the Bosphorus Bridge at Galatasaray University and presented Turkey as a model of democracy and a bridge between East and West.

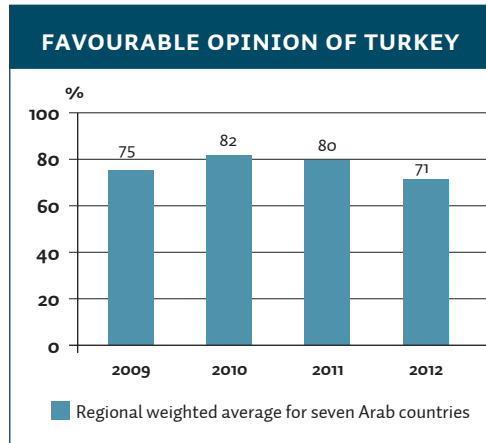
Prior to the Iraqi intervention, Turkey hardly seemed to have attracted the attention of the Arab world. When the Turkish Grand National Assembly voted against allowing the deployment of U.S. troops on Turkish soil despite offers of needed financial assistance, the Arab media and Arab intellectuals began to speak and write positively about the country. Turkey's stance became especially popular when even the Saudi regime permitted the deployment of the troops in its territory, and certainly after the Abu Ghraib prison horrors were leaked to the media, creating a scandal that discredited the invading forces.

There is no doubt that Turkey's mediation effort between Israel and Syria caught the attention of the Arab public opinion and politics. However, Turkey's influence on Arab politics began to grow especially after its reaction to Israel's Gaza operation at the end of 2008. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's humanitarian response in the face of civilian deaths in Gaza, and above all, at the end of January 2009, the tension between Prime Minister Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres in Davos, led to the idea that Turks think about Arabs more than Arabs do for themselves. Arab media repeatedly showed

the scene at Davos of Prime Minister Erdoğan leaving the podium in protest when the moderator did not give him the right of reply, and more importantly, Amr Musa, the Arab League Secretary-General, getting up to leave after Erdoğan but sitting down on warning by the UN Secretary General Moon. The scene became representative in the Arab world of Turkey's new stance towards Arab countries and Arab politics. In such a way, the result of one unplanned incident was an increase in Turkey's influence in Middle East politics.

In 2010, a civilian fleet of six vessels set out from Turkish waters in an attempt to protest Israel's blockade on Gaza by breaking through it with humanitarian aid. The flotilla was organized by a Turkish non-governmental organization, the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH). They were intercepted by the Israeli Defense Forces 120 miles off the country's territorial waters, and violent clashes resulted that left nine civilians dead. This incident helped to reinforce Turkey's image in the Arab world. Although the participants of the fleet and the flag states of the vessels had an international character, the fact that the "admiral ship" was a former passenger ship named Mavi Marmara and that the majority of the activists were from Turkey led the Arab world to see Turkey as a defender of the rights of the people in the region as a whole. This image was magnified by Turkey's "ownership" of the problem and demands for an Israeli apology. The effect of the intervention and Turkish demands, as well as the fact that these demands were met by Israel as of March 2013, will be observed in future research.

The perception surveys conducted by TESEV in 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 reflect the high level of sympathy felt towards Turkey, and this may be seen in the following table, which reflects



that sympathy in the seven selected Arab countries. The AKP's coupling of Islam and democracy, as well as Turkey's rapid economic growth in recent years, have caused the country to be seen as a model.

Turkey's policies supporting the democratic demands of Arab peoples during what has been referred to as the Arab Spring have also contributed to its already established popularity in the region. In addition, in recent years Turkish media has become increasingly popular in Arab countries, and Turkish soap operas, especially, have gained a wide fan base.

The course of the crisis in Syria and Turkey's potential role in solving that crisis will also undoubtedly affect perceptions of Turkey in the region. However, "perception" does not mean everything in diplomacy. With its image and prestige in the region, Turkey may serve as the opinion leader at times when tough decisions need to be made. Turkish politicians' statements may bring stability or instability in many countries in the region, but positive perceptions of the country cannot always lead to power and influence in diplomatic bargaining.

Still, Turkey can be most influential in the Middle East, Gulf Region and to some extent in

North Africa throughout the imperial geography. Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons and reinforce its political leverage in the region make Turkey a more valuable actor. As a member of NATO and a candidate country to the EU, Turkey is seen as a strategic resource by many countries in and outside of the region to offset Iran. As a matter of fact, Turkey is being careful not to directly confront Iran by balancing its power.

In the following pages, you may find the brief summaries and outcomes of the meetings in partnership with PRIO-TESEV.

TURKEY IN THE CAUCASUS: CONTINUITY OR NEW POLICY

The first workshop in Tbilisi took place in September 2012 against the backdrop of turmoil in the Middle East triggered by the so-called Arab Spring. It was therefore not surprising that Turkey's Caucasus policy was debated in reference to its policies and level of involvement in the Middle East. The participants from South Caucasus countries all expressed some disappointment that the Middle East limits the time and effort that Turkey invests in the Caucasus.

The South Caucasus region has one of the most challenging political landscapes, as a home to a multitude of different people, ethnicities, languages, and religions. The region, with its natural resources and geographic location between Asia and Europe, has a huge strategic potential that has not been fully realized due to conflict and shortcomings in development. At the moment, after the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, the status quo in the region is far from satisfying the regions' countries. It is defined as neither desirable nor sustainable in the long term. Georgia is especially uncomfortable with the status quo, which

means to them the continuation of the territorial occupation and the military presence of Russia. However, in the foreseeable future, there is little belief that the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia will return to their status before the 2008 war. The independence of these two disputed territories is recognized by Russia, which gives them enough guarantee to survive as they are in the region. Turkey closely follows the developments in Abkhazia due to strong diaspora ties. Before the 2008 war, Turkey's Black Sea coast regions had close trade ties with Abkhazia. Following the war, Turkey adopted a cautious foreign policy in order not to upset the Georgian government; accordingly Turkey does not do direct trade with Abkhazia and underlines in all occasions that it fully respects Georgia's territorial integrity.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the other hand gives no signs of resolution in the near future. Despite intense diplomatic efforts under the auspices of OSCE and later under the mediation of the Russian Federation, neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia seems ready to make compromises to find a peaceful resolution that will satisfy both sides. A military resolution to the dispute is still an option that worries regional powers, including Turkey. The conflict also blocks Turkey's rapprochement process with Armenia; the Zurich protocols are put into the deep-freeze as a sign of solidarity to Azerbaijan. There is a need for new diplomatic mechanisms if the process is to be revitalized, and Azerbaijan should be involved at some stage in order to prevent a second diplomatic deadlock.

Turkey, being one of the countries with interest and ambitions in the region, is not a direct party to the above-mentioned conflicts but has an indirect involvement and a significant role. The workshop underlined the

continuity in Turkey's Caucasus policy. Until now, Turkey has prioritized stability, territorial integrity, and respect for the sovereignty of the South Caucasus countries. The basic principles of Turkey's foreign policy in the region have not changed much in the past 20 years. These principles are described as follows:

- To maintain regional security and stability
- To explore the means to find a just, viable, and lasting solution through peaceful means to the present conflicts
- To support the independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the South Caucasus countries
- To sustain and support efforts towards democratization, developing free market economies, and to pursue political reform including protection for human rights
- To encourage integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures as well as other international organizations
- To promote regional and intra-regional cooperation
- To establish and promote the parameters for bilateral and regional economic integration
- To assist the region in benefiting, without impediment, from their energy resources

It needs to be noted that relations with Azerbaijan are the back-bone of Turkey's policies towards the region. Georgia is also a good partner of Turkey in the region, with increasing trade volume, visa free travel, and energy cooperation. As one participant put it, Georgia is one of the few exceptions of zero problems with neighboring countries: while most of this policy has collapsed, it still works in bilateral relations with Georgia. The popular zero problems with neighbors principle has its

reflections and critics in the South Caucasus. Many believe it was and still is a good motto. However, the mistake was to make this motto a foreign policy goal, which did not work and as of today only serves as a tool to criticize Foreign Minister Davutoğlu. It should be also noted that this policy is not referred to that often in Turkey and elsewhere anymore.

As for Turkey's policy vision for the region, it was argued that Turkey aspires to create a regional South Caucasus policy going beyond bilateral relations. One of the arguments was a 3+3 approach for the region, referring to the interests and alliances of two sets of three countries: Russia, Iran, and Turkey on one hand and Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on the other. If Turkey is to support such an approach (3+3), it will be quite challenging since the conflicts will not allow such a cooperation mechanism. The existence of long lasting protracted conflicts in the region often stands as an obstacle for promising initiatives. The failure of protocols between Turkey and Armenia is just an example of such a collapse, in which the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh dispute became a stumbling-block to their implementation.

After the August 2008 war, Turkey and the EU focused for a short while on this volatile region, but not enough attention was paid once the immediate crisis was settled. The workshop addressed the necessity for an enhanced dialogue and synergy if not cooperation in full terms between the EU and Turkey. There is disappointment that not enough discussion of joint efforts takes place and that little attention is given to the region unless there is an urgent crisis. This means that there is little work towards creating a sustainable plan for the region. Participants in the workshop expressed a desire to see more involvement of the EU-Turkey cooperation, though their expectations of this cooperation differed.

Ankara sometimes indicates its willingness to take part in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, as well as the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This willingness is in line with Turkey's aspiration to become a worldwide mediator, but the role Turkey can play in the South Caucasus may be limited unless there is a breakthrough with Armenia.

While Georgia looks for more economic cooperation, Azerbaijan expects an even closer political alliance. On the other hand, and not surprisingly, Armenia is hesitant to accept more involvement of Turkey without any advancement in bilateral relations.

The current state of Armenia-Turkey relations opens another debate on Turkey's possible mediation role in the region. Ankara sometimes indicates its willingness to take part in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, as well as the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This willingness is in line with Turkey's aspiration to become a worldwide mediator, but the role Turkey can play in the South Caucasus may be limited unless there is a breakthrough with Armenia. Turkey is not seen as a neutral player due to its alignment with Azerbaijan. A better option for Turkey is to focus on enhancing relations with non-state actors in these three countries, and enlarge its role at social and cultural levels. Turkey can, in addition, assist the EU and NATO aspirations of these countries.

Major criticism towards Turkey from the region:

- Turkey's zero problems policy is too ambitious and is difficult to be realized in the South Caucasus unless relations with Armenia are normalized.
- In line with the first point, Turkey is not seen as a neutral actor in the region due to its policies' emphasis on Azerbaijan.

- Turkey has limited time and energy for the region; therefore is not a game-changer.
- Turkey's limited coordination with the EU and other international actors on regional matters.

TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

In almost all references to Middle Eastern politics, Turkey has become one of the most mentioned country; from politics to economy and to societal relations. This era is facing a re-definition of Turkey's foreign policy, which has positive and multilateral involvement as core principles of this new policy-making. Although the "zero problems with neighbors" policy was introduced as a principle for all the neighboring geographies of Turkey, rather than a regional one, it is often quoted in the Middle Eastern context. Therefore, it has been referred to as a way to criticize Turkey's policies after the beginning of upheavals in the region, and especially with the start of the Syrian crisis.

We mentioned above that Turkey successfully increased its influence in the Middle East whilst maintaining good relations with its Western allies. The "Arab Spring" however, has altered regional alliances and structures, and Turkey was forced to make tough decisions that would impact its future role in the region. The "zero problems" policy was easier to follow in the Middle East before the "Arab Spring". There are different opinions, but the common consensus is that Turkey has performed well in responding to the post-revolution environment in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and to some extent in Yemen. The major test for Turkey is its policy towards once an ally, Syria. The outcome of the crisis will be key in shaping Turkey's influence in the region.

In this context, the main question is whether the crisis in Syria and the regional turmoil will

make Turkey a more powerful actor in the region or limit its role and test its capacity. There is no easy answer to the question, but the immediate one is that Turkey will continue to occupy a large space in regional politics. In addition to facing sharp critics, it will also have to face a tough transition period in the region.

There are a few scenarios regarding the resolution of the Syrian conflict:

- The end of the conflict by international or internal means. This could be done in several ways, one of which is for Turkey and the Arab League to push for international military intervention. Some suggestions at the time of the workshop included Turkey establishing a buffer zone in the border areas from which the Free Syrian Army (FSA) could operate. It is argued that this could give more strength to the FSA, and at the same time help Turkey with its refugee accommodation capacity.
- Another option discussed was to supply the opposition with heavier artillery and more advanced arms if the international community continues to oppose military interference.
- A third way would be to negotiate with the regime's supporters (Russia and Iran) to assure them that their interests will not be altered by a change of regime.

A long, bloody civil war will cause further instability in the region, especially because of the lack of international support for a concrete solution. And without such a concrete solution or strategy to control arms flow into the country, the opposition forces will continue to receive arms from countries like Qatar or Libya, while the regime will continue to be backed militarily by Iran and Russia. In this scenario, a civil war appears to be inevitable. The main issue revolves around how to topple the Assad regime, though the international community,

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and especially, Syria's neighbors also worry about the transitional phase after the regime falls. Who are the main actors that will help the Syrian people toward democracy? And how will the institutional vacuum be filled?

These questions are still valid and crucial for the Syrian people and the region as well. Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt have provided platforms of discussion for the opposition factions as well as bases for coalitions and councils. But more action should be taken on a regional and international level to support the Syrian opposition in order for it to plan the democratic future of Syria. At the moment, Turkey is trying to push for such a coalition, and it might be argued that Turkey is one of the key countries to face the consequences of whatever happens in Syria. On the other hand, it is noted that the crisis is not only a test case for Turkey but also a complicated matter for the entire region and the international community. Additional risk for Turkey is the sectarian politics of the region. Turkey has been trying to resist the sectarian trap, but it is not always easy to escape from criticism once Turkey heavily involved in a crisis like the Syrian one.

The turmoil in the region will also alter the region's energy map. With Syria's future being uncertain, the geopolitical map is still not fully drawn. Many factors play out in that:

- The Arab pipeline project: The Egyptian gas pipeline project was finished over ten years ago, and it aligned well with Turkey's interests as it aspired to become the region's

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energy hub. This pipeline was targeted many times after the Egyptian revolution and it seemed like the new regime in Egypt will focus more on internal gas needs rather than meeting regional demands.

- Regional pipelines (Iran, Iraq, and the KRG): Iraqi oil production has returned to levels not seen since the 1980s, leading to questions about export routes. Turkey is a natural route to the Mediterranean, but questions remain. A settled Syria could well emerge as a rival to Turkey in this regard.
- Russia: The political position it took regarding the Syrian uprising is not only linked to divisions with the West and the U.S., but also because it has been building points of energy interests in the region. Syria plays a role in this. With the new gas finds in the East Mediterranean and Syria's geopolitical position, Russia aims to reach out to Lebanese and Cypriot energy sources as well.

Given all these, and the fact that Turkey is making some contentious bets regarding its favorable relationship with the KRG over the central government in Baghdad, Iraq may be pushed to favor Syria over Turkey as an energy partner. Depending on how Turkey resolves its issues with Iraq and the turnout of the new regional players, Turkey might or might not become the energy hub it is aspiring to be.

Workshop participants remarked that relations between post-Mubarak Egypt and Turkey have become stronger. These good relations are based on the fact that both Egypt and Turkey have mutual interests, a shared history, and common moral and ethical values. As noted by

a participant, the people in Egypt remember that 150 Turkish factories continued to operate during the revolution. Egypt is facing political and economic challenges at the moment, thus the major focus of the country in the short term will be on domestic politics. However, this does not mean that Egypt would not want to see itself as one of the key players of the region. In line with this, the argument is that Turkey's role is very much welcomed but should not be presented as the new leader. Egyptians closely follow public messages from Turkey through media or by other means.

The expectation is a calm working relationship between the two countries in the Middle East. Both countries have been working side by side on the Palestinian issue, trying to reconcile between the Palestinian factions. There is also a newly initiated joint military training between the two countries. Turkey sees that Egypt is an influential actor in the region and views it as a gateway to the Arab world, as well as to Africa. On the other hand, Egypt will benefit from Turkey's European and Western relations to expand its economic and social ties with that region.

Turkey's relations with the Gulf countries, however, while improving both economically and politically, need more attention. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are critical of Turkey's relations with Iran. The GCC may have demands regarding Iran that Turkey could not and would not wish to meet. The general approach from the Gulf is to welcome Turkey to the region, but their position is sharp on Iran, and some claim that Turkey does not want to understand their "Iran concern".

Major criticism for Turkey:

- Turkey should be more transparent concerning its policies in the Middle East region.

- It is much better to present Turkey as an actor in the Middle East politics rather than a leader.
- Turkey, seen as an actor to balance the role of Iran by some, is seen often as a Sunni power. Thus there is a need to further demonstrate Turkey's impartial role.
- Syria is a complicated crisis; Turkey raised too many expectations at the beginning.
- Turkey needs time for capacity building.
- From the West's perspective, the image of Turkey is "sometimes a self-confident but not fully democratic country". The internal democratization process matters a great deal.

TURKEY'S BALKAN ROLE

The amount of time, resources, and energy paid to Balkan countries in Turkey's foreign ministry is significant, though the attention it gets might be less than is given to Middle East politics. One phrase that might summarize the impact of Turkey's policies in the Balkans is "mixed perceptions," as the workshop participants' differing opinions demonstrated.

Turkey's approach to the Balkan region was elaborated under three different time frames. The first one is at the end of the Cold War, when Turkey pursued a rather cautious policy. The argument was that Turkey seemed interested in the Balkan countries to find itself a place in the international arena. At that time, one of the criticisms of Turkey was that it did not use its Muslim identity as a unifying factor in the region. This policy slightly changed with the end of the Cold War. The second phase was the period of Turkey-Greece rapprochement; Turkey prioritized its relations with Greece and was not a visible actor in Balkan politics. Greece used to play the dominant role regarding the Balkans in the EU and

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international platforms. There was still not a major change in Turkey's approach.

That approach started to change by the mid-2000s, which may be seen as the third phase in Turkey's Balkan policy. At the beginning of 2000s, for a very limited period, there was an apparent rivalry between Turkey and Greece in the Balkans. However, more recently, and following Greece's financial crisis, Greece is playing less overt role in the Balkans. As one participant noted, Greece "returned home" with the financial crisis, but in the long run the pace of Turkey-Greece relations might be important for the region. Although the Turkey-Greece antagonism has heretofore not been much reflected in Balkan politics, the continuing inability of the two countries to solve certain of their bilateral problem may ultimately come to bear on Balkan politics insofar as they become an obstacle for regional cooperation.

In the past decade, Turkey introduced new elements to its foreign policy in the Balkan region. One of these new dimensions is the economic one. It is argued to be most successful and most criticized policy as seen below in the perceptions from different countries. One other dimension is engaging with the societies at different levels. There has been a special effort given to embrace the local actors, especially initiating joint projects between Turkish cities and municipalities and partners in the Balkans. In the workshop, the impact of religion was put on the table as one the new dimensions; and as economy, it is a rather controversial one. The argument of neo-Ottomanism seems to find place in the Balkan politics a lot of space. Again,

it receives some criticism from the region and from inside of Turkey. Although the essences of the policy might be good, the common sense is that it does not serve to have right public relations for Turkey.

It was mentioned that it is not only the people of the Balkan countries, but the EU has also expectations from Turkey. The EU itself lacks to have a coherent policy towards the Balkans, and argued that it is not able to deliver much success with its problematic policy making structure. The EU was a late comer to Balkan politics; it got more involved with the Bosnia war, and including the period of the War, was not able to meet expectations. Today, the region has various expectations from the actors including the EU and Turkey.

Perception of Turkey in the Balkans:

Serbia:

- After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Turkey was by all means supporting everyone but the Serbs. Turkey was the first country to recognize Kosovo. Relations got better with high level visits by the leaders of the both countries from 2009 to 2011. Turkey and Serbia signed a free trade agreement in 2009 and visa free travel in 2010. During this period, Ankara also made an offer to Serbia to mediate the conflict in Sandzak. The Istanbul Declaration on April 24th, 2010 was a success. Following that, the Serbian president attended the Srebrenica commemoration in May of the same year (Serbia acknowledged Srebrenica massacre in its parliament and issued an apology declaration in March 2010). This was well received and acknowledged as a positive step towards building peace in the Balkans by Prime Minister Erdoğan.
- The high level bilateral visits stopped with the elections in Serbia (in 2012 Serbia had parliamentary elections and elected a new

president – 6th and 20th of May respectively). The new leaders have not travelled to Turkey yet.

- Economically, the progress has been limited. Expectations of the Serbians were not met. Turkey is not one of the top 25 investors in Serbia. Plans for reconstruction of roads were also not materialized.
- Turkey started to play a pro-active role with Davutoğlu but fell short of meeting high hopes of the people of Serbia.

Bosnia:

- Demands of the Bosnians are diverse. First, they are afraid of losing their identity. “What is a Bosnian identity” is under question. Turkey is involved in the business of constructing religious institutions in Bosnia. This is well received by certain groups but on the other hand creates suspicion for some. They all acknowledge that Turkey’s involvement in the region is more than simply ‘mosque building’, but wait to see Turkey equally active in other areas.
- The officials from Turkey have been engaging with sub-state actors, which are mostly Islamic organizations. The ‘seculars’ of Bosnia feel marginalized.

Kosovo:

- According to the 2010 Gallup survey of Balkan monitor, 93% of Kosovo people view Turkey positively.
- Turkey works hard to help Kosovo to be recognized.
- The efforts of Davutoğlu to play a role between Kosovo and Serbia are well received.
- There is significant improvement after 2008 on relations at all levels. Turkey is among

the first five trade partners of Kosovo. And at the moment there are 11 companies from Turkey operating in Kosovo.

Albania:

- There is an alliance between Turkey and Albania. The Albanians living in Turkey have been instrumental in Turkey's relations with Albania.
- Albania appreciates the support of Turkey. Erdoğan's statement in a TV interview stating that Turkey will side with Albanians in their self-determination and creation of a greater Albanian state received strong criticism from the Serbian and Greek governments, but were welcomed in Albania.

Macedonia:

- The perception in Macedonia is "the enemy of my enemy is my friend", referring to Greece. Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize Macedonia together with Germany and Austria.
- There is not a uniform perception of Turkey among the public. Orthodox Macedonians have some concerns regarding the AKP government. Statements made by Turkish leaders sometimes might have an Islamic reference, and this creates concern among the non-Muslim communities.
- Turkey was economically a low profile player until 2008. Although Turkey was giving political support to Macedonia, economically, Greece was the main investor. With the economic crisis in Europe, Macedonia started to look for other sources and Turkey came in as a good partner. TIKA and Halkbank have small investments. Economic ties are slowly becoming stronger and there is an increase in the cultural exchange through the active schools in the Gülen movement, increasing popularity of

Turkish soap operas, and the level of tourism (impact of flights of THY).

Critics for Turkey's Balkan policy:

- Turkey was doing well in the Balkans until 2010. It had a more balanced approach towards all countries. Recently, its neutral player argument is under question. Different groups and nations have various demands from Turkey, and the country falls short of meeting these multiple demands.
- 'Neo-Ottomanism' is bad public relations for Turkey.
- Turkey is very much involved in mosque construction business according to the participants. This is yet seen as another element of religion oriented involvement of Turkey in the region. People have different demands, mostly economic, from Turkey, rather than reconstruction of religious heritage.
- Turkey appointing imams, especially in Albania and Macedonia, is a matter of concern. Local people are not happy with the appointed imams. They find them too conservative.
- Turkey should give at least equal emphasis on protecting human rights and could help to educate lawyers specializing in human rights and minority issues.
- It is not clear how Turkey defines its diaspora in the Balkans; according to kinship or religion or both. Some argue it is not kinship but religion (being a Muslim) and this gives a wrong image of Turkey in the Balkans.



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TESEV FOREIGN POLICY PROGRAMME

The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) is an independent non-governmental think-tank, analyzing Turkey's most pressing social, cultural, political and economic issues. Based in Istanbul, TESEV was founded in 1994 to serve as a bridge between academic research and the policy-making process in Turkey by opening new channels for policy-oriented dialogue and research.

The Foreign Policy Programme exists to contribute to the democratisation of foreign policy in Turkey and abroad by creating an environment for dialogue on key issues. Activities are grouped under four streams: Bilateral Relations, Turkey's Region, Perceptions Research and the European Union. Within these work streams the Programme looks at issues like Turkey's EU accession, Turkey - Middle East relations, stability in the South Caucasus, the Cyprus problem and public perception of foreign policy.

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