

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute International Studies

Department of Russian and East European Studies

Master thesis

2020

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The 2016 Coup d'état Attempt in Turkey and its Impact in Kosovo: A Look into the Media Discourse Surrounding the 2018 Gülenist Extraditions and the Resulting Turkish-Kosovo Relationship

Master thesis

Prague 2020

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Academic Year: 2019/2020

Bibliographic note

Day, Ryan. *The 2016 Coup d'état Attempt in Turkey and its Impact in Kosovo: A Look into the Media Discourse Surrounding the 2018 Gülenist Extraditions and the Resulting Turkish-Kosovo Relationship*. 62 p. Master thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies. Supervising Professor. PhDr. Ondřej Žíla, Ph.D.

Abstract

The overall purpose of this thesis is three folded; to analyze Turkey's constantly changing influence since the 1990s in the Western Balkans, consider the failed 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and the anti-Gülenist campaign by Erdogan in the region (with Kosovo as the focus), and to delve into the international and local media discourse surrounding the deportations of suspected Gülenist from Kosovo with the help of Turkish intelligence on March 29, 2018. Employing a mixed methodology approach, the author evaluated existing sources in an attempt to answer the research question; "In what ways has the 2016 Coup d'état attempt in Turkey resonated in the Western Balkans, and how did the local and international media discourse portray the 2018 Gülenists extraditions from Kosovo to Turkey?" The research holds that while the media discourse displayed Kosovo and Turkey's actions as being in violation of numerous international laws, the issue was quickly swept away from the spotlight. Since 2012 (the beginning of the Erdogan-Gülen rift) and especially following the 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey, Erdogan has been emboldened by his growing personal relationships with key Balkan politicians. This has led to continued demands (thus far met with little success) that Western Balkan states arrest and deport suspected Gülenists.

Abstrakt

Tento diplomový projekt sleduje tři základní cíle: analyzuje proměňující se vliv Turecka v oblasti tzv. Západního Balkánu od 90. let 20. století, zohledňuje neúspěšný pokus o převrat v Turecku v roce 2016, jež inicioval antigülenistickou kampaň vedenou Erdoganem v regionu (s Kosovem jako hlavním cílem), a na základě případové studie Kosova analyzuje zahraniční a lokální mediální diskurs v Kosovu v souvislosti s deportací tamních Gülenistů. Na základě využití kombinovaných metodologických postupů autor zhodnotil existující zdroje ve snaze zodpovědět hlavní výzkumnou otázku: "Jakými způsoby rezonoval pokus o převrat v Turecku v oblasti Západního Balkánu a jak zahraniční a lokální media prezentovala vydání Gülenistů z Kosova do Turecka. Výzkum dokládá, že ačkoliv byla tato událost v médiích interpretována jako porušení četných mezinárodních zákonů, nevyvolala razantnější reakci. Od roku 2013 (od zahájení rozporů mezi Erdoganem a Gülenem) a obzvláště od selhavšího pokusu o převrat v Turecku, posilovala Erdoganova moc díky upevňujícím se osobním vazbám s klíčovými představiteli Západního Balkánu. Tato skutečnost nakonec vedla k požadavku (byť neúspěšnému), aby vlády států Západního Balkánu zatýkaly a deportovaly další podezřelé Gülenisty.

Klíčová slova

Převrat, Erdogan, zahraniční politika, Gülenist, Islám, Kosovo, média, Neosmanismus, měkká síla, Západní Balkán

Keywords

Coup d'état, Erdogan, Foreign Policy, Gülenists, Islam, Kosovo, Media, Neo-Ottomanism, Soft Power, Western Balkans .

Range of thesis: mimimum range 50 pages, 111,000 th. symbols

Declaration of Authorship

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<p style="text-align: center;">Institute of International Studies Master thesis proposal - The 2016 Coup d'état Attempt in Turkey and its Impact in Kosovo: A Look into the Media Discourse Surrounding the 2018 Gülenist Extraditions and the Resulting Turkish-Kosovo Relationship</p>
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Chapter I – Introduction

Turkish influence in the Western Balkans has undergone a rapid transformation in the past thirty years. Once one of the premier external influences for five centuries during Ottoman times, Turkish influence was heavily diminished because of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. The following century forced Turkey to re-identify its geopolitical strategies and role in the world. This included adjusting its orientation towards Europe and the West by joining NATO and continued consideration of membership in the European Union (EU). Due to Turkey's status as a major actor in the region, it is crucial to analyze the discourse surrounding renewed (though rather weak at the time) Turkish soft power in the Western Balkans starting in the 1990s under the Kemalist (European-oriented) government. Then contrast this period to the Erdogan/AKP, Neo-Ottoman dominated era (asserting Turkish influence in former Ottoman holdings by harkening back to the former perceived glorious Ottoman times) beginning in 2001-2002 until the current time frame.

Following the failed 2016 military coup attempt in Turkey, which the AKP has claimed was orchestrated by Gülen backed forces, Erdogan began utilizing established ties to compel Balkan states to deport suspected Gülenists. These were perceived to be members of a group known as Hizmet founded by Fethullah Gülen. While initially working with Erdogan, the Gülenists fell from power in 2012 due to Erdogans' perception that the Gülenists (whom he had come to view as a rival entity) held too much power in both key government departments and the police force. This pressure has since led to the March 29, 2018, deportation of five Turkish teachers and one doctor suspected of having ties with Hizmet, from Kosovo to Turkey. This action was done with the cooperation of the Turkish MIT and Kosovo AKI intelligence services and resulted in harsh scrutiny at the international and local levels. What is important about this case is that it was the first time that a European country had willingly cooperated with Erdogan. It has the potential to create a precedent in the Balkans for future cooperation, which thus far has not been very forthcoming.

After this initial outrage, the situation was largely dispelled, despite the scrutiny of both local and international media. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including; Erdogan's relationship with Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi that has led to Thaçi remaining relatively quiet

to the situation in both the international and local media, and Kosovo's economic dependence on Turkey that has been fostered since Kosovo's independence in 2008. Thus, while the media and political opposition displayed a fierce campaign of fact finding that resulted in two major political figures being fired and 22 police and security members being indicted, very little else has been done by Kosovo to castigate Turkey for its disregard for international law.

The premise of this thesis is that Turkey uses its cultural, economic, religious, and political influence in the Western Balkans to foster popularity and to exert itself in instances such as the Gülenist deportation case. To accomplish this, it is vital to analyze the reactions of the Turkish government following the coup attempt, while paying special attention to the dynamics between Turkey and Kosovo that followed the 2018 capture of the six Gülenist members by the Turkish MIT and Kosovo AKI. By utilizing media discourse and researching the role of soft Turkish power in Kosovo and the Western Balkans as a whole, the impacts of the attempted coup d'état and Erdogan's resulting actions on the Turkish-Kosovo relationship will be clear. Under Erdogan, Turkey has taken a more assertive role in the Balkans. When a state exerts heightened pressure, as Turkey did leading up the Gülenist extraditions, there are bound to be consequences. In this case, international criticism, and a breakdown of trust between Turkey and its Balkan neighbors has been the unfortunate result.

The following literature review consists of a mixture of academic and media sources that cover the main points of this thesis; Turkish influence in the Western Balkans since the 1990s onwards, the 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey and its aftermath, and the role of Gülenism in the Western Balkans as well as the details of the 2018 Gülenist deportation case and the following Turkish-Kosovo relationship. As the author's primary language is English, and not Albanian or Turkish, only English language sources have been considered. Along with this, since there is a dearth of information available regarding the deportation case, this thesis aims to contribute an academic analysis in regards to this topic. As the existing academic and media discourse tends to display a Euro-centric bias, this thesis will be presented in an impartial manner. To this end, existing Turkish sources that range from the Turkish news source Anadolu Agency to Muhattin Ataman's *July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey: Context, Causes, and Concerns* will be utilized as a means of analyzing both sides of the discussion.

Chapter II – Literature Review and Methodology

2.1 Literature Review – Turkish Influence in the Balkans: 1990s – Present Era

Stefano Taglia's *Ottomanism Then and Now: Historical and Contemporary Meanings* will be the main source of discussion surrounding the concepts of Ottomanism and neo-Ottomanism. Taglia points out that recent scholarly research has focused on the reformulation of political discourse in Turkey, especially following the 2016 coup attempt. This discourse, for many, resembled the imperial military's role in the governments of old as well as the religious politicization that surfaced on July 15th. To quote, "this [research] has become especially pertinent when inquiring into the place of the Ottoman past in Turkish foreign policy, along with the projection of its image as peace broker and success story for the Arab world following the wave of revolutions in the Middle East."¹ It compares and contrasts the two brands of Ottomanism and is a useful tool for discussing neo-Ottomanism that is used today in Turkey's geopolitical strategy in the Balkans.

Kerem Öktem's *Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans* discusses Turkey's changed approach to the Balkans since the early 2000s, which he argues, was changed due to Turkish actors replacing Wahhabi and Salafi missionaries, who were seen by leaders in the Balkans and Turkey as spreading more radical strains of Islam that would be harder to control at the State level. Furthermore, he analyzes four main domains of Turkish influence: intellectual and political networks implemented by former Foreign and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, non-conventional political actors like the Turkish Development Agency (TIKA) and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), and Islamic grassroots organizations like the Gülen Movement.² His main argument is that these domains have been strengthened by the image of neo-Ottomanism and have helped widen the visibility of the Ottoman tradition of Hanafi Islam in the Balkans. This source served a dual purpose for this research: to enhance the discussion on the neo-Ottoman period of Davutoglu in the Western Balkans and to analyze the

¹ Taglia, Stefano. "Ottomanism Then and Now: Historical and Contemporary Meanings." *Die Welt Des Islams* 56, no. 3-4 (2016): 279–89. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-05634p01>.

² Öktem, Kerem. "Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27–58. <https://doi.org/10.1163/221179512x644042>.

role that the Gülenist movement has played in the region before its falling out with Erdogan in 2013.

Alida Vračić's, *Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans*, provides a broad overview of both Turkish soft and hard power since the 90s. It highlights the Turkish view of the Muslim inhabited areas of the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH or Bosnia for short), Kosovo, and Northern Macedonia) as its "hinterland"³ as well as its significant NATO role during the 1990s in Bosnia, and later in Albania and in what is now Northern Macedonia. Vračić further underlines the paradoxical "strategic partnership" that exists between Turkey and Orthodox Serbia. This can be attributed to both states wishing to play the role of religious and cultural mediator in the region as a means of showing the European community their commitment to EU standards and increased Turkish investment in Serbian infrastructure.

Bülent Aras's *Turkey and the Balkans: New Policy in a Changing Regional Environment*, while written in 2012, offers a short analysis of Turkey's methodological approach to the Balkans as a means of initiating a "psychological breakthrough in the Western Balkans to undo the negative memories of the past."⁴ Aras argues that Turkey is attempting to achieve this breakthrough via a three pronged approach: Developing bilateral relations via soft power means (political agreements, organizations that promote Turkish language and culture), the creation of trilateral relations between the various actors that allow for increased relations among them through the means of summits and trilateral talks regarding a myriad of issues, and reaching region-wide cooperation through the South East Europe Cooperation (SEEC) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Aras also argues that Turkey sees the Balkans being on track for EU integration. Given this information, it is not surprising that he considers Turkey's position as similar to the EU approach to the region. Specifically, this plan focuses on dividing the Balkans into sub-zones as a cause for creating tension among potential EU member states and states who have not yet been considered for EU accession.

Western Balkans at the Crossroads: Assessing Influences of Non-Western External Actors, provides a synopsis of Russian, Chinese, Turkish, and the Gulf States strategies in the Balkans.

³ Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

⁴ Aras, Bülent. "Turkey and the Balkans: New Policy in a Changing Regional Environment." The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 31, 2012. file:///C:/Users/rycon/Downloads/1351696866Aras_Balkans_Oct12.pdf.

Due to EU enlargement fatigue, and the EU's inability to fill in the role that the US left behind following the Balkan wars in the 1990s, these strategies have grown significantly. This work demonstrates the overarching influence that Turkey has been working to achieve in the region and has used to pressure Balkan leaders into closing down Gülenist organizations and extraditing Gülenist members to Turkey. The title analyzes the impact of prior external actors in Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. while demonstrating the overarching influence that Turkey has been working to achieve in the region. This influence is important, as it has been used to pressure Balkan leaders into closing down Gülenist organizations and extraditing Gülenist members to Turkey. Thus far, this strategy has regularly backfired, as was seen in the 2018 Kosovo extradition case and in Serbia. Erdogan lost support among the Bosniaks of the Serbian Sandžak region due to his anti-Gülenist agenda.⁵

Oya Dursun-Ozkanca's *Turkish Foreign Policy and the Balkans: Implications on Transatlantic Security* presentation questions Turkey's interest in adhering to its Transatlantic partner's approach to the Western Balkans, by asking the question of whether Turkey's activism puts them at odds with the west. Dursun-Ozkanca effectively provides an overview of the factors hindering Turkish soft power, such as being seen as a biased third party favoring Muslim populations and Turkish limitations in foreign policy. Yet they also enhance those soft powers through prior shared history and culture, and a wish to stabilize the region.⁶ Overall it is an excellent guide that discusses the EU-Turkish interactions in the Balkans and gives insight into the overall picture of competing and corresponding foreign policy goals of both external actors.

Asli Aydıntaşbaş's *From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkan*, when compared to the other sources, is more conciliatory in nature when discussing Turkish foreign policy aims in the Balkans. Aydıntaşbaş argues that the West should not view Turkey as an enemy in the region, but instead should embrace their shared goals of stability by "hugging Turkey close and keeping it out of Russia's embrace."⁷ As other articles utilized in this

⁵ Chrzova , Barbora, Vesa Bashota, Maja Bjeloš, Jan Lalić, Srećko Latal, Martin Naunov , and Hana Semanić. "Western Balkans at the Crossroads: Assessing Influences of Non-Western External Actors." Prague Security Studies Institute , May 2019. http://www.pssi.cz/download/docs/682_final-publication.pdf.

⁶ Dursun- Ozkanca, O. (2019). *Turkish Foreign Policy and the Balkans: Implications on Transatlantic Security*.

⁷ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. "From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans ." ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkans.

thesis have stated, Turkey simply lacks the resources to be the foremost player in the region. This is why Turkey's goals have seen three shifts under AKP rule according to Aydıntaşbaş:

- Atlanticism (working closely with the Americans and NATO) and following the European model as a means to gain access to the EU from the 1990s to 2009;
- a shift to neo-Ottomanism under foreign minister and eventually prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu that extended ties to not just Muslim Balkan states, but to the Western Balkans as a whole.
- and, a refocused approach by Erdogan following Davutoglu's departure from power in 2016 that saw an emphasis on bilateral relations and trade, and Erdogan's wish for Turkey to be seen as an "elder brother" to Balkan Muslims.⁸

The last source for this section is Žarko Petrovic and Reljic Dusan's *Turkish Interests and Involvement in the Western Balkans : A Score Card*. They discuss the arguments of Turkey's role in the Western Balkans , with scholars from the 2011 ISAC Fund Conference insisting that "Turkey understands far better the intricacies of the region's problems than the West and is thus better qualified to act as an "honest broker."⁹ On the other hand, scholars such as Piro Misha contend that Turkey's "geopolitical vision" is suspect in terms of cooperation with Europe as it brings unwanted competition into the fray. Furthermore, the authors argue that Turkey's role in 2012 was largely symbolic rather than pragmatic, and that while relations between Turkey and the Western Balkans have never been more intensive during the Turkish Republic (a result of the Davutoğlu led neo-Ottoman period), they have yet to establish serious economic bases in the region. Lastly, while Turkey has improved relations with the non-Muslim portions of the region, they must still contend with the general distrust from the populace and politicians who view the Ottoman era as one filled with oppression rather than growth.

While many of these sources are overlapping in content in relation to Turkish influence, they are included because discourse in this field is still relatively scarce in comparison to existing research on other external actors. Also, each of them offers a slightly different take on Turkey's role, how they are perceived by other actors (such as the EU, China, Russia, the Gulf States, and the U.S), and how their geopolitical strategy has taken on multiple forms since the 1990s. It is

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Petrovic, Žarko, and Dusan Reljic. "Insight Turkey, Vol. 13 No. 3, 2011 SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research." ISAC Fund, 2011. <https://www.isac-fund.org/en/publication/insight-turkey-vol-13-no-3-2011-seta-foundation-for-political-economic-and-social-research>.

important to point out that this portion of the research is providing a framework for discussing the overall situation regarding Erdogan's new pragmatic approach to the region and his anti-Gülenist campaign that has stirred up the Western Balkans, especially in Kosovo. Also, sources used were predominantly outlining economic indicators (FDI and trade outflows) that were found in the main sources. These came from a myriad of groups including the United States Conference on Trade and Development, and the Turkish Central Bank.

2.2 Literature Review – The 2016 Coup d' etat Attempt

Muhattin Ataman's *July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey: Context, Causes, and Concerns* provides a wide and comprehensive look at the political, economic, and cultural impact that the coup attempt had on Turkey through the lens of pro-AKP scholars. Ataman briefly discusses the coup attempts of 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 and compares them to the most recent 2016 attempt. He states that "July 15, 2016, different in many aspects from previous coups, was the latest attempt to overthrow the legitimate government of Turkey and to reverse the changes it had implemented."¹⁰ Furthermore, he argues that the coup was a brainchild of Fetullah Gülen, leader of the Gülenist movement, as opposed to the military led coups listed prior in which the military intervened in the name of preserving a secular state. While this source has displayed an obvious bias in favor of Erdogan and the AKP, it is included in order to cover multiple discourses surrounding the event, rather than to simply utilize literature that portrays a one-sided, western narrative. This source was analyzed with caution.

Potential implications of the attempted coup d'état and counter-coup in Turkey for domestic politics and regional security by Erin McGrath takes a more cautionary approach in outlining the events of July 15, 2016, and the immediate aftermath of the failed coup. He further discusses the July 20, 2016, government mandated decree (OHAL) that implemented a three-month state of emergency, granting the President and Cabinet powers that reversed the traditional legislative process. This gave Erdogan an enhanced amount of Presidential power that was used for the following purge of suspected coup sympathizers and government dissidents. Statistics are given regarding the number of state, military, media, education, and health employees that were forced

¹⁰ Ataman, Muhittin. *July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey: Context, Causes, and Consequences*. Ankara: SETA, 2017.

from their jobs, which paints an even more ominous picture for the future of Turkish democracy in the near future.

Christopher Kilford offers a more personal account of the events leading up to the July 2016 coup attempt. Kilford was a Canadian military attaché to Turkey from 2011-2014 and conducted interviews of Turkish and foreign diplomats, journalists, and military officers in May 2017. This work outlines the early beginnings of the coup planning, which Kilford contends started in 2013 or 2014 due to the falling out of Gülen and Erodgan, and then is solidified following the AKP winning a majority in November 2015. It then underlines the events of July 15th in the shape of a narrative discourse based on Kilford's interviews. This work offers a more hands on approach to the events surrounding the coup and is very thorough in its analysis of the key actors on both sides, and how each of their actions affected the outcome. While it does not delve into the implications of the aftermath, it is a great tool for deciphering the time frame of the coup and providing details otherwise not given in the other broader discourses regarding this topic.

Sharan Grewal's *Who Wants a Coup? A List Experiment in Turkey* discusses the theory for when the opposition in a country will support a coup. According to Grewal it can be hypothesized that the opposition will refuse to support a coup attempt when three factors are present:

- they can win the upcoming elections;
- the military will not appoint opposition members to power;
- and, a coup will bring support to the ruling party.¹¹

To supplement this theory, a list experiment of 820 Turkish citizens were asked about their support for the Peace at Home Council's attempt to overthrow the Erdogan regime, and results found that many of them adhered to the latter two questions as reasons for supporting the trend of military coups in Turkey. While this source somewhat detracts from the main discourse about the coup itself, it is important to analyze because it points out the reasons the coup failed and why even oppositionists joined forces with the government supporters to stop the military's movements and eventually contribute to the coup failing to gain steam.

¹¹ Grewal, Sharan. "Who Wants a Coup? A List Experiment in Turkey." October 3, 2018. https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/grewal/files/grewal_turkey.pdf.

Lastly, is Drew Holland Kinney's *Civilian Actors in the Military Drama of July 2016*. In a similar tune to Grewal, Kinney considers the role of the general populace in the coup and looks at three questions that branched from a single theme, "Which is the role that civilians play in the drama of the military coup d'état."¹² The first question asks what part, if any, that civilians had in orchestrating the coup. The second is what role did civilians have in preventing the coup's success? Third, how can we expect civilians to react in different social and institutional settings? The paper finds that civilian actors (politicians especially) did a better job of convincing the masses than the plotters of the coup of their government authority and legitimacy. For people across the spectrum, while Erdogan's government has been autocratic at times, a coup would be the quickest path to an outright autocracy. In tandem with Kilford, it appears that civilian actors, such as the opposition, saw the coup as a potential boost to Erdogan's regime, and that the military would do little in forwarding the opposition's agenda.

It is important to review scholarly sources that discuss the coup, as the coup was a direct factor that led Erdogan to ramp up his anti-Gülenist campaign in the Balkans. While evidence of his intentions in the Balkans was growing prior to 2016, the coup attempt gave Erdogan a scapegoat, and allowed him to ramp up pressure on Balkan leaders to hand over alleged Gülenists. It also gave Erdogan legitimacy in the region as a democratically elected leader that received support from members of the entire political spectrum. This led to sweeping changes in the Turkish political model not including the three-month mandate granting the Prime Minister and Cabinet a wide scope of political power and leverage.

2.3 Literature Review – Who Are the Gülenists and the Crisis in Kosovo

In *The Good, the Bad and the Gülenists* Asli Aydintaşbaş points out that the Gülenists are perceived as the main perpetrators of the coup attempt, and that the extradition request of Turkey for Gülen himself from the US has created turbulence as "for the US, this is a legal matter; for Ankara, a prerequisite for partnership."¹³ Furthermore, as has been previously stated, the Turkish government has risked its democratic foundations in its massive purges of potential Gülenists in the government and private sector. Aydintaşbaş also gives a short synopsis of Gülen's rise to

¹² Kinney, Drew Holland. "Civilian Actors in the Turkish Military Drama of July 2016," September 19, 2019. http://www.emgr.unic.ac.cy/wp-content/uploads/EMPN_10.pdf.

¹³ Aydintaşbaş, Asli. "The Good, the Bad and the Gülenists." ECFR.EU, September 23, 2016. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_good_the_bad_and_the_gulenists7131.

power in Turkey as one of its most powerful religious figureheads. She discusses his fall from grace due and the rift that was created in 2012 between the AKP and Gülen. She also points out that this was due to what Erdogan perceived as a witch hunt against government corruption via the pro-Gülenist forces, who were considered the deep state portion of the AKP and considered Erdogan their main political rival.

Both BBC news and Ömer Taşpınar of the Brookings Institute provide a guide, discussing at length the Gülen/Erdogan alliance that started in 2007 following an attempted coup by military leaders and its inevitable end in 2012-2013. Each of these builds upon the description of Erdogan's reasoning for his Gülenist purges not just in Turkey, but in the Balkans where there is a highly concentrated amount of Gülen-sponsored organizations and private institutions.

Anadolu Agency provides an in-depth analysis of such groups and their presence in much of the Western Balkans. Gordana Knezevic, of Radio-Free Europe, discusses the Gülenist movement in Bosnia and in particular, which Gülenist schools have been active since 1997. As she contends, "Bosnia may find itself no longer a showcase for Turkish power and largesse, however token or was the symbolic, but a new battlefield in a suddenly furious domestic dispute."¹⁴ This can be said about the Western Balkans as a whole, where Erdogan has increased his pressure for states to extradite Gülenists (who are predominantly educators). However, with the exceptions of Bulgaria and possibly Serbia in the near future, Balkan states have been hesitant in the face of this pressure to follow through on Erdogan's requests.

The incident that occurred on March 29, 2018, in Prishtina, Kosovo that resulted in six Gülenist educators being flown out of the country to Turkey has proven to be an exception. Due to the recency of the deportations, scholarly sources are not yet available. Both local and international media sources, however, are abundant. International sources, such as articles by Nick Ashdown of Ahval News and Aj Naddaf of the Pulitzer Center predictably focus on the international repercussions of the extraditions. In addition, local news such as the Prishtina Insight (a digital and print magazine published by the independent Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Kosovo (BIRN)), Balkan Insight (an independent English news source that is also a product of the BIRN), and Kosovo 2.0 (founded in 2010 as a blogging platform/journalism

¹⁴ Knezevic, Gordana. "Bosnia's Gulenist Network." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, July 22, 2016. <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-gulenist-network/27873908.html>.

source that covers current affairs in Kosovo) have analyzed the initial media firestorm that erupted at the local level. Kosovo President Thaci, along with 22 members of the police force, were accused of perpetrating the deportations in correlation with Turkish intelligence.¹⁵

In summation, Turkish influence in the Balkans since 1991 has undergone drastic changes in how Turkey has interacted with the region. The Kemalist period of the 1990s was a reorientation to the Balkans, with Turkey working under the scope of its doctrine of cooperation with both NATO and the US (Atlanticism). This doctrine continued under Erdogan until 2009 with the rise of Ahmet Davutoğlu as prime minister. It can be argued that until 2016 under Davutoglu, Turkey's foreign policy was one that extended Turkish interests beyond the Muslim portions of the Balkans into states such as Serbia. The most recent period has seen Erdogan implement more pragmatic trade ties and bi-lateral relations that have come to be known as Erdoganism. While Turkey is not a leader in economic factors such as foreign direct investment, it has been attempting to make up for it with its cultural ties to the region.

Discussing the Turkish coup attempt, Grewal outlines the reasons for the coup's failure as the opposition's lack of faith in the military to instill them to power and a fear of future coups that have been rationalized by the past coups in the 20th century. While the identity of the event's perpetrators is up for debate, scholars such as Ataman argue that the Gülenist movement were the devils on the military's shoulders that helped enact the events of July 15, 2016. While this claim cannot tie Gülen himself to the coup, the falling out between Gülen and Erdogan in 2012 has given Turkey cause for enacting a worldwide campaign to subdue and prosecute Hizmet.

The movement has embedded itself in the Western Balkans in the form of education and other humanitarian organizations, which has endeared them to the populace and caused the Western Balkans states to hesitate when under pressure from Erdogan to deport Gülenists. Kosovo met this pressure firsthand following the deportations of six Gülenists from Prishtina in a joint effort of Kosovo and Turkish Special Intelligence. The lasting results of this breach in national sovereignty have yet to be seen. It is crucial to analyze the still underdeveloped discourse surrounding Turkey's role in the Western Balkans and how this influence can potentially affect future relations in the region.

¹⁵ Leposhtica, Labinot. "22 Police Staff Implicated in 'Gülenist' Deportation Case." Prishtina Insight, August 15, 2019. <https://prishtinainsight.com/22-police-staff-gulenist-deportation-case/>.

2.4 - Methodology

This thesis focuses on the question of how the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey resonated in Kosovo. Furthermore, the local and international media discourse surrounding the coup and the 2018 Gülenist extraditions portrayed the Kosovo-Turkish relationship is also discussed. Predictably, it is organized under the framework of a media discourse analysis/case study in the sense that the thesis is divided into three portions: Turkey's role in the Western Balkans since the 1990s, the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, and finally an analysis of media discourse on the Gülenist deportations from Kosovo.

A social-constructivist approach to these topics is employed to analyze the key actors, societies, and individuals that become influential tools when discussing Turkish-Balkan relations. This paper also takes a non-normative approach as it does not argue the right or wrong of Turkey's actions, but rather focuses on analyzing the discourse that exists from various sources on the topic at hand.

This paper delves into the role of Turkey in the Western Balkans from the 1990s onward, because it can be divided into three periods: Kemalist, neo-Ottomanism, and Erdoganism.¹⁶ It is important to look at the concepts of Ottomanism and neo-Ottomanism as used in the discourse surrounding Turkey's soft power in the Western Balkans and point out their similarities and differences. According to Taglia, under Ottoman rule the concept of Ottomanism came to be a national discourse during the beginning of the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876). It was not one overarching policy, but served predominantly as a mechanism that highlighted the Turkish Islamic authority and rule of the Sultan to non-Turkish ethnic groups living outside Turkey's traditional borders. Specifically, it could be considered an anti-colonial measure due to its promotion of Islamic education and policies. It also helped the non-Turkish groups such as Jews, Arabs, Kurds, Slavs, and Albanians form dual identities to both the Ottoman empire and to their ethnic communities.

¹⁶ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. "From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans ." ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkans.

Neo-Ottomanism, on the other hand, is more linear in its outlook as it is a train of thought that promotes a remembrance of things rather than a mechanism to control that used to be and the promotion of all things Ottoman.¹⁷ Both concepts share this concept of promoting Ottoman ideals, and it has been used by Davutoğlu and other Turkish authorities to try and unify Turkey's former holding in the Western Balkans.

The qualitative analysis of Turkish influence in the Western Balkans is made up of academic discourse from think tanks and NGO's that consider Turkey's economic, cultural, political, and religious ties to the region. This analysis takes into account that, considering the political ideology of the author, these sources would portray a bias that displayed a more Euro-centric position when discussing Turkish influence in the region. The focus, here, is on the cultural and religious impact that Turkey has had throughout the region. While its economic ties are mostly in the form of infrastructure, it still lags far behind the likes of the EU and China in this regard. Furthermore, Erdogan has used this perceived shared culture to foster bilateral relations and exert influence. The quantitative research was predominantly focused on pre-existing economic figures (FDI, loans, and other existing economic indicators).

Regarding the coup attempt in Turkey, a qualitative approach is identified in both media and academic discourse from both Turkish and international sources. These documents contain an assumption of the underlying reasons for the coup, the events during and after July 15, 2016, and why the coup failed. The coup, while ultimately failing, served as a catalyst for Erdogan to ramp up his anti-Gülenist campaign in the Balkans due to his claim that Gülen supporters were the main perpetrators. A review of existing knowledge of the Gülenist movement itself was conducted by analyzing their initial foundations in the 1970s, but predominantly looked at the period from 2008-2013, when Fethullah Gülen and Erdogan were on amicable terms and Gülen's forces served as a deep state asset in the police force and military that shook off the former Kemalist roots in Turkey.¹⁸ It was necessary to further review the "Gülenist soft power" in the Western Balkans, which form the roots that have been laid down via organizations such as the

¹⁷ Taglia, Stefano. "Ottomanism Then and Now: Historical and Contemporary Meanings." *Die Welt Des Islams* 56, no. 3-4 (2016): 279-89. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-05634p01>.

¹⁸ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. "The Good, the Bad and the Gülenists." ECFR.EU, September 23, 2016. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_good_the_bad_and_the_gulenists7131.

SEMA Foundation (privatization of religious institutions,) and private universities and schools (e.g., Burch University in Bosnia).¹⁹

The last section provides a media analysis of the suspected Gülenist deportations from Kosovo in 2018. As academic sources on this topic do not exist yet, the qualitative analysis used over 30 local media sources such as Prishtina Insight, Balkan Insight, Kosovo 2.0, and International media sources for reviewing the event. These sources discuss the aftermath of the deportations starting in March 2018, and the local sources covered the ensuing parliamentary inquiries into the perpetrators, which carried on through the summer 2019. Most if not all sources appear to arrive at a consensus that Turkey overstepped its bounds by stepping on another country's national sovereignty. And yet, the world community has remained largely ignorant

Finally, the viability of Turkey using its cultural influence and economic influence to exert itself in instances such as the Gülenist deportation case study, is demonstrated. In some sense it is not as effective as one would imagine, but Erdogan sees the Balkans as a periphery zone where his rule of law also applies. It demonstrates that the media discourse has painted the strong relationship between Turkey and Kosovo in a different light, one that portrays Turkey as an aggressive external actor willing to impose its will without hesitation due to its strong ties to Kosovo.

Chapter III - Background on Turkish Influence in the Western Balkans from the 1990s-Present Era

3.1 - Turkey's Inroads in the Western Balkans in the 1990s – 2009

Turkey's role in former Yugoslavia (from the 1990s onward it is referred to as the Western Balkans) from 1922 –1980 could, in many ways, be characterized as a formal one. In 1953, an Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation, later known as the Balkan Pact, was signed between Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia. This treaty was considered a bulwark against what these states

¹⁹ "Fetullah Gulen's Broad Western Balkans Network." Anadolu Ajansı, July 28, 2016. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/education/fetullah-gulens-broad-western-balkans-network/617524>.

perceived as Soviet pressure in the region. The 1950s onward saw Turkey and Yugoslavia reassessing their relationship due to the latter increasingly showing a non-Soviet international policy, and Turkey officially joining NATO in 1952.²⁰ This change was further manifested in the 1980s, with the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, which prompted the already thin threads that tied Yugoslavia together to start to unwind. Coupled with the dissolution of the USSR in the late 1980s, Turkey was forced to assume a more multilateral international approach, with the Western Balkans being one of the center-pieces to the new puzzle.

While Turkey was prepared to honor Yugoslavia's integrity, when this concept became futile, Turkey embarked on a new set of policies in the region. This is highlighted by the support for the Muslim populations in the region, in particular Bosniaks following the onset of the 1992 Bosnian war. One of the major reasons for this support is the prevalence of Turkish minorities in the Balkans, and the somewhat large Albanian and Bosniak diaspora in Turkey. Mass amounts of Balkan Muslims have migrated to Turkey, with one estimate putting the total numbers at 1,643,058 from 1923-1995.²¹

This influx, along with the already ethnic Turks who claimed Balkan ancestry (Turkish officials have claimed that this number is around 10 million), enhanced the already existing sense of shared cultural ties between Turkey and its perceived hinterland.²² This was also a focal point for Turkey's reemergence and served as a valuable asset when Turkey inserted itself into internal affairs in the region. As Dursun-Ozkana contends, "in the 1990s, Turkey played an active role in the establishment of the regional stability and integration initiatives such as the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Stability Pact, South-Eastern European Cooperation Process, and NATO-led South East Europe Initiative."²³ Coupled with this was Turkey's attempt to respond to an increased Greek presence in the region, and to break free from the conception of Turkey being a "wing state" under the watchful eye of the U.S.²⁴

²⁰ Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

²¹ Bulut, Esra. "'Friends, Balkans, Statesmen Lend Us Your Ears': The Trans-state and State in Links between Turkey and the Balkans", *Ethnopolitics* 5, no. 3 (30 November 2006): 309–26.

²² Ibid

²³ Dursun- Ozkanca, O. (2019). *Turkish Foreign Policy and the Balkans: Implications on Transatlantic Security*.

²⁴ Petrovic, Žarko, and Dusan Reljic. "Insight Turkey, Vol. 13 No. 3, 2011 SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research." ISAC Fund, 2011. <https://www.isac-fund.org/en/publication/insight-turkey-vol-13-no-3-2011-seta-foundation-for-political-economic-and-social-research>.

During the 1990s, BiH was Turkey's central point of interest in the Western Balkans. This can be attributed to the shared Islamic faith, Turkish art and its popularity in the country, and the estimated use of 6,878 Turkish common words in the Serbo-Croatian language.²⁵²⁶ According to a 2012 poll conducted by the Wise Man Center for Strategic Studies (BILGESAM) of over 2,127 interviewees, 60.2% saw Turkey as being a friendly country. 72.5% of Bosniaks interviewed held a favorable view of Turkey and considered it the best place to live abroad.²⁷ The biggest reason Turkey was so invested in BiH during the 90s however, was the war that erupted there in 1992, with several parliamentary sessions being held from 1992-1995 where the opposition demanded that Turkey take a more unilateral stance in defending the Muslim communities there.²⁸ Ankara was adamant about who it perceived as the aggressor during the 1992-1995 war, viewing the killing of Muslims (whom Turkey viewed as a shared community) on European soil as a valid reason for Turkish intervention. However, it was hesitant to directly support either side, instead choosing to adhere to the NATO line of intervention rather than going it alone via unilateral military actions.²⁹

This is very telling, as throughout the conflict Turkish military hardliners criticized what they perceived as inaction, when it came to Turkey defending their Muslim kin. This reflects the period when Turkey still advocated for multilateral agreements and a joint international approach to handling the situations that arose during the 90s period in the Balkans. Turkey also committed 39.8 million Euro to BiH via the 1996 Priority Reconstruction and Recovery Program, which was about a tenth of the amount donated by the entire European community.³⁰ The ethnic conflicts of the 1990s; the Bosnian war from 1992-1995, the Kosovo war in 1999, Prishtina's quest for independence, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's squabbles with Greece over the name issue, all allowed Turkey to portray itself as a peace broker. Through the aid of EU and UN frameworks they were able to transition towards a policy of soft power and public diplomacy at the turn of the century.

²⁵ Škaljić, Abdulah. *Turcizmi u srpsko-hrvatskom jeziku* [Turkish expressions in Serbo-Croatian language], 6th issue (Sarajevo, 1989).

²⁶ Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

With the rise of the AKP party in 2002, Turkey started developing and implementing new foreign policy goals in the Western Balkans, with the mastermind being then Chief Advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan from 2003 -2009, Ahmet Davutoğlu. With his book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position*, he laid out his plans for increased Turkish interest in the Balkans. It is important to distinguish that Davutoğlu did not prioritize the economic aspects, rather he emphasized the cultural, geographical, and historical links of Turkey to the Balkans as a natural expression of the region's Ottoman past.³¹

The biggest roadblock to this policy, however, was how Turkey was initially perceived at this time by its former Ottoman holdings in the Balkans. This was especially true when considering Christian Serbs and Croats, but also parts of the Albanian intelligentsia. Although Muslim in faith, they were forced to attend Turkish schools, speak Turkish (instead of native dialects), and forcibly relinquish legally held property.³² With discriminatory measures in place against non-Muslim populations and ongoing issues with Ottoman-controlled Albania, Turkey had an uphill battle through the early 2000s – 2009, as they attempted to establish solid relationships. This was why it implemented a pro-active foreign policy of “zero problems with neighbors,” and “win-win” scenarios which prioritized shared goals; EU ascension, peace and stability, and a shared economic neighborhood, which Davutoğlu modeled after the European Neighborhood Policy.

Furthermore, with Turkey's EU ascension blocked in 2006, the logical alternative was to turn to its neighbors in Eurasia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. At the time this was perceived as being a way of attracting more allies to the Turkish EU cause, and to some extent, it is true today if the Western Balkans are able to join the EU before Turkey. Although, the passion for Turkey joining has died down since the early 2000s. In this time period the AKP party, in spite of its attempts to break down the Kemalist influences in Turkey, still considered themselves joint partners with their western allies. As Balkans expert Birgül Demirtas points out, “by being active on the Balkan stage and undertaking a supportive role for the Bosniaks in international platforms, Turkey attempted to prove its importance to the Western world.”³³ This is illustrated

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Demirtas, Birgül, “Turkey and the Balkans: Overcoming Prejudices, Building Bridges, and Constructing a Common Future”, *Perceptions*, Summer 2013, Volume xviii, p. 168, quoted in Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. “From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans.” ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019.

https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkans.

by Turkey's relationships with the newly-formed governments in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Albania, for whom Turkey advocated for NATO involvement and joint military treaties (signed with Macedonia in 1995 and 1996 and BiH in that same time period). This resulted in Turkey's joint NATO military training operations in Macedonia (*Essential Harvest* in 2001, *Amber Fox* 2001-2003, and *Allied Harmony* in 2003).³⁴ Turkey also was one of the major international players in the Kosovo conflict, with over 1,000 troops stationed in the country with the NATO peacekeeping forces in July, 1999, and it provided its military air facilities to the organization during bombings of Serbia and Montenegro.

Furthermore, Turkey was the second country after the United States to recognize Kosovo's independence in 2008. It was an active participant in NATO's peacekeeping forces during the ethnic wars in the 1990s, predominantly safeguarding Muslims ethnic groups at the behest of the Islamist elements of the Turkish government. The government, along with Davutoğlu, disagreed with the Kemalist view that it was necessary to reject its former Ottoman roots as being stagnant. Instead the AKP posited that Turkey should augment its western orientation with a renewed interest in Eurasia, the Middle East, and the Balkans.

This religious question also played a large role during the early AKP period, with the Turkish Hanafi school of Islam having been, for centuries, the dominant strand of Islam in both Turkey and the Balkans. With other strains of Islam being introduced, such as neo-Salafism and Wahhabism from the Gulf States, it was seen as an important mission by the AKP party to keep their historical religious legacy in the region intact.³⁵ It was appealing not only to kinsman in the Balkans, but also to Turkish voters and to the post 9/11 west, who viewed Islamic organizations in the Balkans with an air of suspicion and widely accepted Turkey's moderate Islam as a replacement to the previously mentioned Islamic schools of thought.

During the secular and isolationist Kemalist period, Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans was limited to this secular-ethnic model of pan-Turkism, due to their rejection of the Ottoman period. Visionaries such as 1980s Prime Minister and President Turgut Özal, and later Foreign

³⁴ Petrovic, Žarko, and Dusan Reljic. "Insight Turkey, Vol. 13 No. 3, 2011 SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research." ISAC Fund, 2011. <https://www.isac-fund.org/en/publication/insight-turkey-vol-13-no-3-2011-seta-foundation-for-political-economic-and-social-research>.

³⁵ Öktem, Kerem. "Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 33. <https://doi.org/10.1163/221179512x644042>.

Minister Ismail Cem, were some of the first to question this model and advocate the importance of looking to Turkey's Imperial Ottoman past for guidance. This was realized under the AKP following 2002 and later became the foundation for Davutoğlu's foreign policy objectives.³⁶

Thus, from 2002-2009, it was the Prime Minister's office under Erdogan and not the still secular Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs that employed Davutoğlu and presided over the religious inroads into the Balkans.³⁷ Organizations such as the Turkish Development Agency (TIKA), the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), Islamic brotherhoods, and the Gülenists were a few such organizations that helped to develop the AKP's developing neo-Ottoman vision in the Western Balkans, culminating in Davutoğlu's rise to Foreign Minister in 2009 and a new period in Turkey's foreign policy.

To summarize this period, Turkish influence from 1922–1980 could be considered moderate at best, with the 1953 Balkan pact as one of the few regional agreements signed between Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. It was not until the 1980s and the chaos that erupted in the Balkans following the breakup of the USSR and Yugoslavia, that Turkey began to take a more assertive role in the region. This change took place for several reasons. The ethnic wars of the 1990s prompted mass support for Balkan Muslims from Turks with Balkan ancestry. They also helped tie Turkey to its former holdings, with it being one of the primary supporters of NATO peacekeeping forces during this time period. Turkey further wished to show the west that it was no longer a “wing state” under U.S. guidance, but a primary player that could help promote stability and EU and NATO programs.

The secular and anti-Ottoman Kemalist era was then seriously challenged following the AKP victories in 2002. This led to a promotion of the glorious Ottoman past and introduction of religious groups such as TIKA and the Diyanet to the Western Balkans under Prime Minister Erdogan and Davutoğlu. This provided Turkey with another asset it could rely on to spread soft power. It is important to note that despite this change from the 1990s until 2009, Turkey still wished to work under the Atlantic framework as a partner with the west. With Turkey's EU bid

³⁶ Öktem, Kerem. “Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans.” *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/221179512x644042>.

³⁷ Ibid

being put on hold in 2006, Turkey was forced to look for alternative economic options, which was not a focal point for Turkey's goals in the Balkans prior to this period.

3.2 – Turkey's Davutoğlu led Neo-Ottoman era in the Western Balkans 2009 – 2016

This second phase in Turkey's foreign policy in the Western Balkans can be characterized as a flurry of diplomatic initiatives scattered with references to Turkey's Ottoman legacy that happened almost instantly following Davutoğlu's nomination as Foreign Minister in 2009. In his book, *Strategic Depth*, Davutoğlu puts forth the argument that Turkey should focus its Balkans policy on the Bosniaks and Albanians, as they are the two key Muslim communities in the region. However, Davutoğlu also focused his attention on establishing ties with Serbia and Macedonia and building upon trilateral talks between Turkey-Croatia-BiH in 2009 and Turkey-Serbia- BiH in 2010.

The main goal of these talks was to augment Turkey's ability as a negotiator in the region and to foster positive relations among the states involved. While talks with Croatia were not entirely fruitful (due to Croatia moving towards EU membership at the time), Serbia was considered a main target with whom Turkey wished to deepen economic ties. While the results have been mixed, they did bear fruit, especially in the realm of establishing political relationships. Since 2009, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Croatia, and BiH have met four times, and Turkey, Serbia and BiH have met nine times.³⁸ Another was a first-ever meeting between Serbian President Boris Tadić and BiH Bosniak Presidential Representative Haris Silajdžić at the historic Istanbul declaration in April 2010, which followed with BiH sending an ambassador to Belgrade after a three-year hiatus and Serbia recognizing Bosnia's territorial integrity.³⁹

In 2010 the Serbian parliament passed a declaration condemning the crimes that occurred at Srebrenica during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war.⁴⁰ Perhaps the biggest benefit of the Istanbul Summit was the enhanced relationship with Serbia (including a visa-free agreement that was signed in July 2010), which was viewed as vital to smoothing out ties between Croatia, BiH, and

³⁸ Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

³⁹ Aras, Bülent. "Turkey and the Balkans: New Policy in a Changing Regional Environment." The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 31, 2012. file:///C:/Users/rycon/Downloads/1351696866Aras_Balkans_Oct12.pdf.

⁴⁰ Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

Serbia and helping to bring the region into the European framework. As then Turkish President Abdullah Gül said, “Those who read history should know that the Balkans would have peace and security under a united roof. Now that roof is the large European Union umbrella.”⁴¹ This relationship has seen hiccups, with the most notable one being in 2013 following Erdogan’s claim that, “Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo”, which caused Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić to cancel a planned trilateral talk.⁴²

This rhetoric was hardly a rarity during the Davutoğlu period, with such talk becoming a regular mechanism of neo-Ottoman propaganda directed towards the Western Balkans . As said by Aras in 2012, “Turkish politicians often refer to the people of Balkan origin within Turkey as a necessary link and solid bridge with the Balkans.”⁴³ Davutoğlu has been one of the main perpetrators of this rhetoric. At a December, 2009 conference on the Ottoman Legacy and Balkans Muslim Communities, Davutoğlu argued that, “During the Ottoman state, the Balkan region became the center of world politics in the 16th century. This was the Golden Age of the Balkans.”⁴⁴ He then articulated that in order for the Balkans to avoid becoming a periphery or a victim of the geo-strategic games being played between great powers in the region, they should re-establish the glories of the Ottoman empire. He has also claimed that Serbo-Croatian was the second most spoken language in the Ottoman court in the 16th century, which can be viewed as an attempt of combating Turkey’s image in the region as a biased negotiator.

Erdogan, during this time, advanced the notion of a glorious Ottoman past, as seen from his “Kosovo is Turkey, Turkey is Kosovo” comments. During a speech in Sarajevo in 2009, he stated that, “As the Ottoman Balkans has risen to the center of world politics in the sixteenth century, we will make the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre

⁴¹ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. “From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans .” ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019.

https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkansbe.

⁴² Vračić, Alida. “Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP,” December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

⁴³ Aras, Bülent. “Turkey and the Balkans: New Policy in a Changing Regional Environment.” The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 31, 2012.

file:///C:/Users/rycon/Downloads/1351696866Aras_Balkans_Oct12.pdf.

⁴⁴ “Address by H. E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Turkey at the Opening Session of the Alliance of Civilizations’ First South East Europe Ministerial Conference” (14 December 2009), <https://goo.gl/Nkmtzf>, quoted in Vračić, Alida. “Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP,” December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

of world politics.”⁴⁵ These thoughts are also reflected in his post-election victory address in March 2014. In it, he displays his fondness for the Balkans, thanking his brothers in Bosnia, in Macedonia, and in Kosovo for their support, which he compares to the support given to him from the 81 provinces in Turkey itself. While these comments inspire a sense of community between Turkey and her Muslim brethren, these actions were a cause of tension for Croatia and Serbia, who have looked at these comments with suspicion.

To highlight this statement even further, in 2014, a joint Turkish-Bosnian naval exercise at the Bosnian port of Neum was canceled due to the Bosnian Serbs and Croats in Parliament rejecting the entry of two Turkish military vessels. The reason was that one of the vessels was named after the famous Turkish Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, which for the Christian portions of Bosnia, represented a clear representation of Turkey’s neo-Ottoman aims in the country.⁴⁶

In terms of economic influence, Turkey has to this day viewed the economic potential in the region as small at best. However, Turkey saw increased economic investment to the Western Balkans along with its cultural links, as the best path to securing its role in the region. Until 2004, Turkey limited its annual foreign direct investment (FDI) to Bulgaria and Romania. However, with liberalization and the bilateral relationships made by Davutoğlu, more channels were opened between the Western Balkans and Turkey. In 2010, BiH was the largest recipient of Turkish FDI, with \$61 million being given in 2009, most of it coming because of Turkish Airlines buying 49% of BH Airlines, though the deal was eventually cancelled.⁴⁷

In 2011 Turkish FDI to the Western Balkans amounted to 10% of its total FDI totals abroad.⁴⁸ In 2015, according to the Turkish Central Bank, Turkish FDI numbers increased in line with Davutoğlu’s goal of better relations with the Western Balkans : €16.5 million in Albania,

⁴⁵ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. “From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans .” ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019.

https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkansbe.

⁴⁶ Vračić, Alida. “Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP,” December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ United States Conference on Trade and Development, Investment Country Profiles: Turkey, UNCTAD/WEB/DIAE/IA/2012/6 (February 2012), quoted in Vračić, Alida. “Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP,” December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf

€32.1 million in Bosnia, €10.1 million in Montenegro, €10.1 million in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), €14.6 million in Serbia, and a record high €54.1 million in Kosovo.⁴⁹ However, this only amounted to 3% of Turkey's total FDI in 2015.

Turkey, while seeing itself as an important external influence, saw little economic gain in the region due to its low population, and low purchasing power. States like Germany, Italy, Austria, Greece, France, and Hungary all provide more to the region in terms of investment and banking. Furthermore, these figures show that in the realm of economics, that Turkey favors the Muslim states, where organizations like TIKA provide funding for restoration projects that have ties to the Ottoman past. Other groups like the Gülenists, Diyanet, and the Yunus Emre Cultural Center provide or have provided centers that offer teachings that revolve around Turkish culture, language, religion, and art. Turkish media, such as the state run TRT and Anadolu Agency News Service, offer radio and television programs in all languages.

Ironically, one of the biggest Turkish influencers are its homegrown soap operas. According to researcher Mehmet Huseyin Bilgin, Turkey was the second highest global exporter of TV series behind the United States in 2014, with almost every major Balkan television channel having broadcasted at least one Turkish soap opera.⁵⁰ Many of the shows portray Turkey and the Ottoman empire in a positive light, which provides nostalgia and entertainment, especially for those with a lower educational background. Shows such as *The Last Emperor* (a soap opera depicting the 19th century Sultan Abdul Hamid II as a virtuous and law bringer), have incited controversy. Many are not directly funded by the Turkish government, but are seen as a blast from the past and show Turkey as a modern and moderate country, which fits into Erdogan and the AKP's foreign policy aims in the region. To sum up the 2009-2016 period under Davutoğlu's leadership, it can be said that Turkey's role in the region became more pronounced. Though in many ways, it is still limited in its cultural influence outside of the Muslim communities.

Increased economic investment, though still small compared to other external actors, showed that Turkey was trying to further diversify its influence beyond cultural impact. Davutoğlu and Erdogan were two of the main perpetrators of utilizing neo-Ottoman dialogue in speeches. This

⁴⁹ Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf.

⁵⁰ Ely, Nicole. "Much-Loved Soaps Polish Turkey's Image in Balkans." *Balkan Insight*, June 19, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/18/much-loved-soaps-polish-turkeys-image-in-balkans/>.

can be seen as an attempt to further tie Turkey and the Western Balkans together under a shared past. Turkish organizations like TIKA and the Gülenists provide or have provided the ground-level approach of showing Turkey in a positive light. The biggest issue that still affects perception today is the increasingly authoritarian nature of Erdogan's government, and the countless scandals and arrests of journalists and attacks on free media sources. Furthermore, the July 2016 coup attempt and subsequent blame placed on the Gülenists by Erdogan have also strained relationships in the Western Balkans. The one exception to this has been BiH, which has seen its Muslim community express predominantly positive feelings towards former Ottoman rule and see Turkey as a positive force in the region.

3.3 – 2016 to Current Era: A look at Erdoganism and Pragmatism

The third and most recent phase of Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkans since 2016 has seen an increased role for President Erdogan and an uptick in economic ties. This is mixed with a reduced diplomatic and cultural role. Erdogan has sought to establish a more direct role via personal ties with Western Balkan leaders and with certain ethnic communities, such as the Sandžak region of Serbia and Montenegro and other Muslim groups across the region.

An example of this attempt to create personal ties can be shown at Erdogan's Presidential swearing in ceremony at the newly constructed palace in Ankara in 2018. Most European leaders decided not to attend due to the recent constitutional changes that granted the President a plethora of new powers. Western Balkan leaders, however, were in full attendance with front row seating. This full engagement was later reenacted in 2018 with the opening of the new Istanbul airport, with the leaders of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Serbia receiving invitations.⁵¹

Erdogan has centered his current Balkan policy around relationships with Serbian President Aleksander Vucic, Kosovar President Hashim Thaçi, leading Bosniak party (SDA) leader Bakir Izetbegovic, and Albanian prime minister Edi Rama. While these relations have served their original purpose as being direct diplomatic channels in these states, they also have served to portray Erdogan as a regional strong man and a paternal figure in the former Ottoman lands.

⁵¹ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. "From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans ." ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkansbe.

This serves as a win-win for both sides; Erdogan for the aforementioned reasons and the leaders of the Western Balkans, as they receive special treatment when in Turkey. It also shows the EU that the region is not adverse to looking to alternative actors for aid and support. As seen by Erdogan's relationship with Vucic, a nationalist, Turkey has arguably taken the middle ground in supporting whoever ends up in office. This is mainly due to the fact that its most favored ethnic groups (with the exceptions of Albania and BiH) are too small to affect politics at the highest level. Therefore, Turkey wishes to play a regional role, but not one where it is the hegemon. As stated by one Turkish Diplomat, "It wants to be the primary actor in its own region, but not a hegemon to run it."⁵²

Turkey still uses soft power tools, such as TIKA, the Diyanet, and Yunus Emre to provide language and cultural courses in the wake of Erdogan's anti-Gülenist agenda. While TIKA only spends 18% of its global yearly budget on the Western Balkans (mainly for restoration projects and microfinancing projects for businesses), it is a source of pride for the Turkish government to showcase its home soil.⁵³

Turkey is a global power that has the resources to help those in need around the world and one that follows in the footsteps of the Ottoman Empire, whom the AKP argues was a source of civilization in the Balkans. In states like North Macedonia (4% Turkish minority and 33% Muslim minority), Montenegro, Albania, and BiH, Turkish media plays an important political role in enhancing the country's image. In addition to the previously discussed Turkish soap operas, Turkish news agencies like Zaman Makedonya, Yeni Balkan, TRT, and the Ankararun Anadolu Agency are a few of such said tools that help spread Turkish influence abroad.⁵⁴

The biggest shoes to fill for the Turkish government has been the former role of the Gülenist organizations, which Turkey has offered to replace with Maarif foundations. These schools offer a mix of Islamic teachings and regular classes, and there are already Maarif schools in Albania,

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Chrzova , Barbora, Vesa Bashota, Maja Bjeloš, Jan Lalić, Srećko Latal, Martin Naunov , and Hana Semanić. "Western Balkans at the Crossroads: Assessing Influences of Non-Western External Actors ." Prague Security Studies Institute , May 2019. http://www.pssi.cz/download/docs/682_final-publication.pdf.

Macedonia, BiH, and Kosovo.⁵⁵ In general, the purge of Gülenists by Erdogan has been a sore point in his relations with the Western Balkans. The majority of states have been hesitant for a variety of reasons (Gülenist schools good reputations, rule of law pertaining to EU ascension) to work with Erdogan, whom they view as overly intrusive by intervening into their internal affairs.

In the Erdogan era, regional economic ties have been viewed as one of the more important goals for Turkish foreign policy. For Turkey, the Western Balkans is a region that has not yet followed on a distinct path and has yet to have one overarching influence. In their eyes, China has yet to fully establish itself as a major player, Russia is limited to the Orthodox regions and is simply posturing, and the EU has been too distracted with internal issues to fully pay attention to the still economically impoverished region.

This economic aspect began in the Davutoğlu era, with Turkish trade to the Balkans peaking at \$20 billion in 2014, and exports topping at \$10 billion, with a third going to Serbia (who also is the largest regional trading partner with Turkey, with a \$1 billion dollar trade surplus in 2018).⁵⁶ Furthermore, Turkish companies have found themselves in a prime position to insert themselves into the largely infrastructure-lacking economies in the Western Balkans, predominantly in the fields of telecommunications, construction, transport, and finance.⁵⁷ To say that Turkey has upped its economic game in the Western Balkans is accurate. However, when countered with the fact that Turkish trade with the EU in 2018 sat at \$14.5 billion shows that Turkey still does not view the Western Balkans as a major source of economic income.⁵⁸

To conclude this section and chapter, Erdogan since 2016 has improved his personal relationship with key leaders and strengthened already existing economic ties rather than implementing region-wide diplomatic bonds. While Turkish economic influence still lags behind other powers like the EU and China, Erdogan uses a vast array of organizations and news agencies to offset this handicap. Though it has been met with mixed reviews, especially in the non-Muslim areas of the Balkans where there still remains distinct negative memories of the Ottoman past. With Erdogan's anti-Gülenist campaign continuing to exert pressure on Western

⁵⁵ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. "From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans ." ECFR.EU, March 13, 2019.

https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkansbe.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Ibid

Balkan leaders, and his increasingly authoritarian leadership style clashing with the EU style of governance, it is yet to be seen if he can keep Turkey's image as a mediator and positive influence intact in the years to come.

Chapter IV – The July 15, 2016 Coup Attempt in Turkey and an Overview of Gülenism and its Impact in the Western Balkans

4.1 – July 15, 2016: The Events Surrounding the Coup and the Aftermath

The failed attempt of the self-proclaimed “Peace at Home Council” to usurp President Erdogan has proven to be the catalyst for the latter's anti-Gülenist campaign in the years that have followed. For Erdogan, it was the supporters of Gülen who initiated the coup. According to Turkey's Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ in 2017, Gülen “would have come to Turkey from Pennsylvania like Ayatollah Khomeini landed in Tehran.”⁵⁹ Gülen himself has countered this claim with the assertion that Erdogan himself was the puppet master of the coup in an attempt to silence his critics permanently.

Ataman argues that the 2016 coup attempt was different from the multiple other coups that have plagued the Turkish government during the 20th century. According to him, the past coups were intended to uphold the secularist principles of the government to prevent Islamic principles from becoming the dominant force. The 2016 attempt, on the other hand, was simply an attempt to take down the democratically elected AKP party.⁶⁰ This section looked to briefly underline the events that occurred leading up to the coup, the coup attempt itself, and the aftermath.

The time leading up to the coup was fraught with rumors of a military takeover. According to the Turkish prosecutors, in the aftermath, a large number of the military members were firmly entrenched in the pro-Gülenist camp. The pro government source *Daily Sabah* made the claim in March, 2016 that 50% of Turkey's F-16 fighter pilots were Gülenists.⁶¹ While this claim was

⁵⁹ Kilford, Christopher. “THE NIGHT THAT SHOOK A NATION: The 2016 Turkish Military Coup - What Happened and Why It Failed.” *CDA Institute*, 2018. <https://cdainstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Vimy-Paper-37-Final-1.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Ataman, Muhittin. *July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey: Context, Causes, and Consequences*. Anarka : SETA, 2017.

⁶¹ Kilford, Christopher. “THE NIGHT THAT SHOOK A NATION: The 2016 Turkish Military Coup - What Happened and Why It Failed.” *CDA Institute*, 2018. <https://cdainstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Vimy-Paper-37-Final-1.pdf>.

rebuked by the Turkish General Staff (TGS), the signs of a potential coup had been noticeable since 2013, with the Gülenist-AKP rift all but sealed.

Gülen's supporters were in the police and judiciary and were using their positions to uproot the AKP party and fight corruption at the highest level. In response, Erdogan orchestrated a mass campaign against Gülenist institutions. Universities, newspapers (such as *Zaman*), and the police force were purged. This gave Erdogan the control he desired and was a leading factor in the increasingly authoritarian tendencies that have categorized his rule as of late. The proverbial needle that broke the camel's back, however, was the snap election victory of the AKP party in November, 2015. Compared to the June, 2015 election, which the AKP lost a majority for the first time since 2002, these elections all but ensured that any changes would be dashed by an AKP party unwilling to form a coalition. Furthermore, the coup plotters became weary that the many Gülenists in the military would be purged in the August, 2016 promotion and retirement board. Thus, the next stage had been set for the events that would unfold on July 16, 2016.

According to prosecutors, the leader of the civilian forces was Dr. Adil Öksüz (also known as the Gülenist Iman of the Air Force) while the leader of the military portion was former leader of the Air Force and then member of the Turkish Supreme Military Council General Akin Öztürk.⁶² The plan was to announce the coup to then TGS Chief General Hulusi Askar at 0230 hours, with his arrest to follow, in the event he refused to cooperate. Due to the confession of the coup attempt by Major Osman Karaca to authorities,, the timeline was forced to go forward, with the initiation of the coup beginning at 2121 hours on July 15th (or six hours ahead of schedule). The actual martial law address was read on the state run TRT news station at midnight.⁶³

Some of the major locations that coup plotter Brigadier-General Mehmet Partigöç ordered be seized included the Bosphorus Bridge, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, Taksim Square, the Disaster Coordination Center, Atatürk International Airport, Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, Istanbul Police Headquarters, and the Istanbul Riot Police Headquarters.⁶⁴ Pro-coup forces also made their way towards the presidential complex and the parliament building in Ankara, where

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ataman, Muhittin. July 15 Coup Attempt in Turkey: Context, Causes, and Consequences. Anark SETA, 2017

⁶⁴ Kilford, Christopher. "THE NIGHT THAT SHOOK A NATION: The 2016 Turkish Military Coup - What Happened and Why It Failed." *CDA Institute*, 2018. <https://cdainstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Vimy-Paper-37-Final-1.pdf>.

they engaged in fighting with pro-government forces. Many air bases across Turkey provided pro-coup forces with a means of transporting troops to Ankara, with a major exception being the Eskişehir Operation Center, which remained in government hands.

Erdogan was supposed to be captured at his hotel in Marmaris on the Aegean coast at 0300 hours, but the six-hour change of plans saved him. He was informed of the coup by Hakan Fidan and taken away from the hotel via helicopter shortly after 1 am. Before he left, he was able to hold a video call, in which he showed that he was neither captured or killed. This, along with the initial leak of the coup, proved to be crucial. At 052 hours on July 16th, the last dagger in the back of the coup attempt leaders took place. General Ümit Dündar confirmed on live television that the coup was not led by the TGS, which led to over 80,000 mosques calling for people to take to the streets in the defense of both democracy and the Turkish telephone group Turkcell. A nationwide text was released to customers with messages from Erdogan relaying a similar message.⁶⁵

There were still attempts by pro-coup forces to take over key sectors in Istanbul and Ankara. These attempted takeovers included the Doğan Media Center in Istanbul, home to the newspapers Daily Hürriyet, the Hürriyet Daily News, and television channels CNN Türk and Kanal D. Also, the hotel where Erdogan had previously been vacationing was advanced upon. The coup's momentum had been ground to a halt, and by 0940 hours on July 16th, 900 pro-coup soldiers had surrendered to the police force, and many of the coup leaders were taken into custody.⁶⁶

According to Grewal, the failed coup attempt can be broken down into three categories.

- (1) they (the opposition) can win in elections rather than through potentially violent means, (2) the military will not appoint the opposition to power and instead promote themselves to power, or (3) a coup will increase sympathy for the ruling party (which in the 2016 coup attempt was the end result, with citizens taking to the streets in support of the ruling party).⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Grewal, Sharan. "Who Wants a Coup? A List Experiment In Turkey." October 3, 2018. https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/grewal/files/grewal_turkey.pdf.

The results of a study on 820 Turkish citizens indicated that many were opposed to the attempt due to a failure of the pro-coup members to fulfill one or all of the categories listed above. By 2016, the government opposition had come to believe that they could defeat the AKP government in elections, and they were also aware that coup attempts do not always serve the purpose of enhancing public opinion of opposition movements.

Furthermore, as Grewal states, “It may not be readily apparent why a military would fear resistance from unarmed civilians. Couldn’t the coup-plotters simply fire upon protesters, if needed? The fact of the matter is that many soldiers may not be willing to kill civilians.”⁶⁸ This assumption correlates with the massive amount of protestors who took to the streets, blocking bridges and swarming pro-coup forces, due to their support of the Erdogan regime, whom many perceived to be duly elected. These factors are merely speculation, but it is apparent that at the time of the coup, the pro-coup members lacked the support of much of the populace and the opposition movement. Ömer Taşpınar further supports these claims, arguing that the coup failed for three reasons:

- the lack of societal support;
- the top brass in the military and the chief of staff were not involved;
- Lastly, the 6 hour change that led to the coup plotters losing the control they so desperately needed for the coup to succeed.⁶⁹

In the aftermath, Turkey implemented a state of emergency for three months (later extended another three months in October, 2016) and left nearly 300 soldiers and civilians dead: 179 civilians, 62 police officers, 24 procoup soldiers and five soldiers.⁷⁰ The count of wounded was estimated to be between two and three thousand.⁷¹ Civilian groups were called to remain vigilant and report potential coup plotters, with the movement by the government and these groups being labeled as *demokrasi nöbeti*, or the “democracy guard”.⁷² The state of emergency is important to note, due to its overruling of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the increased

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Taşpınar, Ömer. “The Failed Coup and Turkey’s Gulenist Predicament.” Brookings. Brookings, August 9, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-failed-coup-and-turkeys-gulenist-predicament/>.

⁷⁰ McGrath, Erin. “Potential Implications of the Attempted Coup D’etat and Counter-Coup in Turkey for Domestic Politics and Regional Security.” | START.umd.edu, October 11, 2016. <https://www.start.umd.edu/news/potential-implications-attempted-coup-d-etat-and-counter-coup-turkey-domestic-politics-and>.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

powers it granted to the President and Cabinet, which curtailed citizens' rights to speech, expression, mobility, and a plethora of other basic human rights. 104,914 members in the public and private sectors were relieved of their duties, with many of those numbers taking place in the education, health and civil society sectors.⁷³ The military also saw enormous cuts, which as argued earlier, had a large number of suspected Gülenists, as well as in the police force and the public sector.

Drew Holland Kinney speculated on the role of civilian forces in the coup attempt, which would directly correspond to Erdogan's claim the Gülen's forces were behind the movement. In Kinney's eyes, at face value the coup attempt follows the standard model for a coup; disgruntled military officers attempting to topple a regime. However, it is difficult to point blame towards Gülen led civilian actors, though not entirely unfeasible. One of the biggest marks against Gülen came from the *Middle East Eye*. As argued, "Mohammad Dahlan—a Palestinian political actor who keeps a close relationship with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan—indeed 'transferred money to the plotters in Turkey'" and that, "in the weeks before the coup attempt [... he] communicated with Fethullah Gülen, the cleric alleged by Turkey to have masterminded the plot, via a Palestinian businessman based in the US."⁷⁴

This meeting, however, does not constitute proof that Gülen was behind the attempt, as his conversation with Dahlan could have been unrelated and therefore, inconsequential. It is apparent however, as displayed in earlier discussions, that Gülen has had an active reason to see Erdogan deposed and had the power to do so with his connections in the police and military. Gülen himself denied taking part in the attempt, arguing that as a person who had undergone numerous coups attempts in the past 50 years, it is preposterous that he would take part in such a deed.⁷⁵ Similarly, the pro-Gülen organization, Alliance for Shared Values, also condemned the coup attempt, stating that "For more than 40 years, Fethullah Gülen and Hizmet participants have advocated for, and demonstrated their commitment to, peace and democracy. We have consistently denounced military interventions in domestic politics... We condemn any military intervention in domestic politics of Turkey."⁷⁶ Gülen's firm response hinted at his meaning;

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Hearst, David. "EXCLUSIVE: UAE 'funneled money to Turkish coup plotters,'" *Middle East Eye*, 29 July 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/exclusive-uae-funnelled-money-turkish-coup-plotters-2144167>.

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

since civilians create democracy and the military subverts it, that civilians cannot subvert it. Therefore, despite his connections in the military and police forces, Gülen is innocent.⁷⁷

To connect these discussions to the main questions of this thesis, the failed coup attempt has served a dual purpose for Erdogan; a strengthening of his regime atop Turkish politics, and the catalyst for upping his anti-Gülenist campaign across the region. The coup itself failed due to a myriad of technical issues, but also the lack of general support from the populace and opposition towards the pro-coup plotters. The aftermath saw a strict regulation of basic human rights and enhanced government oversight which was strongly denounced by many in the international community as a clear sign that Erdogan profited from the violence of the July 15-16 events. Erdogan himself stated this, saying that the failed coup was “a gift from God” not only for him, but the AKP party as well.⁷⁸

4.2 – Gülenists: Terrorist Group or Humanitarian Foundation?

Fethullah Gülen’s movement can be said to originate from the teachings of Said-i Nursi, who was a Kurd and Sufi Islamist, as well as a teacher to Gülen. Nursi’s modernist Islamic teachings were considered by many to be a lifeline to millions of Turks, as Sufi teachings and religious sects were banned in 1925 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and were considered dangerous until the AKP period in the early 2000s.⁷⁹ To counteract this persecution Gülen, along with other followers of the Nur movement, were forced to operate from the shadows. By integrating themselves into the Turkish government apparatus, they attempted to lessen government repression. This is ironic, as Gülen and his followers both adored and feared the Turkish state, which was typical of religious sects during the republican period in Turkey. This movement now goes by many titles, which range from FETO, Hizmet (service), and simply the Gülenists.

Gülen hailed from eastern Turkey, where he established multiple chapters of the Association for Fighting Communism. Before this, he started his career as an Imam in the 1970s in the west of the country. He was arrested in 1986 after initially being investigated in 1980 following the Turkish military coup, where leading Turkish generals suspected him of attempting to topple the

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Taşpınar, Ömer. “The Failed Coup and Turkey's Gulenist Predicament.” Brookings. Brookings, August 9, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-failed-coup-and-turkeys-gulenist-predicament/>.

⁷⁹ Aydıntaşbaş, Aslı. “The Good, the Bad and the Gülenists.” ECFR.EU, September 23, 2016. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_good_the_bad_and_the_gulenists7131.

government. He was released, only to be convicted again in 2000, which led him to stay in the United States, where he has resided since 1998.⁸⁰ Gülen can be considered a Turkish Nationalist by nature and was not swayed by the Iranian and other Arab religious revolutions in the 1980s. Instead, he was an advocate for the accrual of power within the Turkish state and creating a “golden generation” of young Turks who would run the country for the decades to come.⁸¹

Gülen’s movement was buoyed by the AKP’s rise to power, as both the AKP and Erdogan favored a political version of Turkish Islam, which coincided with Gülen’s cultural Islamic teachings. Along with this, Gülen was bolstered by an estimated net worth of between \$15 - \$20 billion dollars, which was donated by numerous sources in Turkey and abroad, and resulted from ownership of projects in construction and publishing companies, and over 1,000 “Turkish schools” spread across 170 states. It goes without saying that the Gülenist movement has been a powerful group of organizations under the Gülen banner.⁸² This can be partially attributed to the assistance of the Turkish government, which starting in 2010 instructed diplomats to assist Gülen schools abroad, and to provide transportation and funds for aspiring Gülenist ventures. This is especially visible in Africa, where the AKP moved to expand its influence in 2011 and 2012. Within the Turkish government itself, Erdogan was heavily reliant on Gülenist bureaucratic expertise to help remove the remaining Kemalists and military members entrenched there. This led to the 2010 fabricated claims against over 300 army officials being jailed for their suspected roles in a 2003 coup attempt.

Following the military’s loss of power within the government, a power struggle erupted between Erdogan and Gülen, with Erdogan, in 2013, threatening to shut down thousands of private institutions, of which a quarter were Gülenist backed. He further attempted to clean out the Gülenist strongholds in the judiciary branch, police force, and government ministries, which led to the police force carrying out mass raids against businessmen and allies loyal to Erdogan.⁸³ These raids convinced Erdogan that the Gülenists were a dangerous adversary and the Turkish government formally declared the group a terrorist organization in 2016.

⁸⁰ “Turkey Coup: What Is Gulen Movement and What Does It Want?” BBC News. BBC, July 21, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36855846>.

⁸¹ Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. “The Good, the Bad and the Gülenists.” ECFR.EU, September 23, 2016. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_good_the_bad_and_the_gulenists7131.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ “Turkey Coup: What Is Gulen Movement and What Does It Want?” BBC News. BBC, July 21, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36855846>.

Since 2013, Erdogan has called for mass arrests of Gülenists both in Turkey and abroad, as well as the closing of schools and businesses loyal to Gülen. The 2016 coup attempt was a tremendous aid to this campaign, as it allowed Erdogan to clean out many who were thought to be loyal to Hizmet. According to the Foreign Policy news group, “In our research, we found that the presence of Gülenists in various civil service sectors ranged from 1.5 percent to 11.3 percent of all civil servants. The Gülenist presence in education was striking, with influence across roughly 18 percent of all private dorms and 11 percent of all private schools.”⁸⁴ While this purge was successful in Turkey, Erdogan has met little success abroad, especially in the Western Balkans, where the Gülenist’s efforts have been viewed in a positive light due to the income that is generated and the moderate Islamic message

4.3- Gülenist’s Role in the Western Balkans

This Gülenist influence can especially be found in the Western Balkans, most notably in Albania and BiH. According to the Turkish state run Anadolu Agency, “FETO, which prioritizes investments in the education field, operates a total of 40 schools including 15 schools in Bosnia, 12 in Albania, 7 in Macedonia, 5 in Kosovo, and one in Serbia.”⁸⁵ Kerem’s research also focused on educational institutions, as seen by figure 1 below.

⁸⁴ Bozcaga, Tugba, and Fotini Christia. “The Geography of Gulenism in Turkey.” Foreign Policy. Foreign Policy, March 18, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/18/the-geography-of-gulenism-in-turkey/>.

⁸⁵ “Fetullah Gulen's Broad Western Balkans Network.” Anadolu Ajansı, July 28, 2016. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/education/fetullah-gulens-broad-western-balkans-network/617524>.

Country	Institutions
Kosovo	Umbrella organisation Gulistan Education Centre (2000) Mehmet Akif College, Prishtina (2000) Mehmet Akif College, Prizren
Albania	Umbrella organisation Sema Foundation, <i>Fondacioni Sema</i> Colleges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tirana, Kolegji Mehmet Akif (1993) • Shkoder, Shkolla Hasan Riza Pasha (2001) • Tirana, Institucioni Parashkollor M. Akif (2006) • Tirana, Qendër Kursesh Meridian (2006) <p>The following medreses are operated jointly with the <i>Komuniteti Musliman</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elbasan—Cerrik, Liria • Kavajë, Hafiz Ali Korça, • Tiranë, H. Mahmud Dashi • Buharaja-Berat, Medrese Vexhi) • Korça Epoka University (2008)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Bosna Sema Foundation (1997) Primary schools in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarajevo • Tuzla • Zenica Colleges in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarajevo • Bihać • Tuzla International Burch University Sarajevo (2008)
Macedonia	Yahya Kemal Colleges and primary schools in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skopje (1996) • Gostivar (1999) • Struga (2002) Zaman Makedonya

Based on fieldwork interviews and online resources.

Figure 1: Gülenist Institutions in the Western Balkans ⁸⁶

The first of such schools started during the Kemalist era, with teachers establishing learning centers in Albania as early as 1993, Macedonia in 1996, BiH in 1997, and Kosovo in 2000.⁸⁷ It is important once again to note that these organizations do not have an established hierarchy. Instead, they are mirrored with Gülenist programs in Turkey, run by local grassroots organizations, and offer predominantly secular curriculums in English, Turkish, and local languages. As a result of this local approach, the institutions do not rely upon state funding, but instead receive aid from their parent programs in Turkey, and from local groups within the populace. Alumni associations and parent groups from predominantly middle class to upper class families are the main sources of growth, and also have helped anchor these institutions into the cultural fabric of those states involved. This has proven a catalyst for the overall resistance to Erdogan's anti-Gülenist objectives in the region.

⁸⁶ Öktem, Kerem. "Global Diyanet and Multiple Networks: Turkey's New Presence in the Balkans." *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 1, no. 1 (2012): 33. <https://doi.org/10.1163/221179512x644042>.

⁸⁷ Ibid

One of the countries most embroiled in this issue is BiH. Despite its solid standing with President Erdogan, BiH has a large network of long-active Gülenist schools scattered across the major cities and towns in the country. In 2015, Erdogan asked the country to close all its Gülenist backed schools, and to date, this request has gone unanswered. This is surprising considering the support Turkey receives from Bosnian Muslims. This support comes from the perceived notion of Turkey as the successor of the Ottoman empire, and although Turkey does not fall into the top ten investors to Bosnia, it has been a key contributor to the restoration of symbolic projects, such as the Old Bridge in Mostar and the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka.⁸⁸

The current situation has recently intensified, with Balkan Insight reporting the December 2019 arrest of suspected Gülenist Fatih Keskin by Bosnian police. Keskin, the director of Richmond Park Schools in Bihac, Bosnia, had his residence permit revoked on the grounds of national security, and when he refused to sign documents, was moved to Sarajevo.⁸⁹ Harun Tursanovic, the Richmond Park Schools Public Relations Officer argued that the arrest was full of “irregularities” stating that “The Service for Foreigners’ Affairs, SPS, had previously told us that all those with permanent resident permits would not have any problems over Turkish demands – but now this is happening.”⁹⁰ This uptick in pressure from Ankara may be attributable to Erdogan’s success in Kosovo, but could be a reflection of the influence that Turkey has cultivated in BiH, with the results slowly starting to manifest themselves.

This symbolism is only effective with the Muslim population, as both the Bosnian Serbs and Croats have their own respective homelands they look to, thus further inciting domestic disputes among the three ethnic groups in the country. North Macedonia has also faced multiple extradition requests for suspected Gülenists, including requests in 2019 to send 15 Turkish nationals accused of terrorism back to Turkey.⁹¹ While both countries have maintained secrecy in regards to their identities, the Turkish embassy has been more forthcoming, stating that “they

⁸⁸ Knezevic, Gordana. “Bosnia's Gulenist Network.” RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, July 22, 2016. <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-gulenist-network/27873908.html>.

⁸⁹ Buyuk, Hamdi Firat. 2019. “Bosnian Arrest of ‘Gülenist’ School Head Sparks Extradition Fears.” Balkan Insight. December 4, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/12/04/bosnian-arrest-of-gulenist-school-head-sparks-extradition-fears/>.

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Apostolov, Vlado. “Turkish Pressure on North Macedonia Worries Gulen Supporters.” Balkan Insight, April 17, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/04/17/turkish-pressure-on-north-macedonia-worries-gulen-supporters/>.

include heads of educational institutions and members of Turkish-language media and NGOs working in the country.”⁹² Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar also has called for North Macedonia to hand over suspected terrorists, saying he expected the country to take “action” in an April 2019 visit to Skopje.⁹³ NATO ascension is an important bargaining chip that Turkey has used to gain leverage over the country, but Northern Macedonia has yet to budge on the matter without proper evidence presented, despite the pressure exerted.

In total, officials estimate that Turkish security services have brought back 80 Turkish citizens from 18 states around the world.⁹⁴ These arrests have ranged from states as far apart as Afghanistan(unconfirmed), Pakistan (unconfirmed), Moldova (public), Sudan (unconfirmed), and Malaysia(public).⁹⁵ This shows that while Turkish citizens have attempted to flee their homeland, they still are at risk of being sent back and tried for their perceived crimes. For example, in Albania Turkish citizens such as Ahmet and his wife Yasemin (names protected for security reasons), were forced to flee Turkey after having Ahmet’s television career derailed, and Turkish intelligence later stalking the family in Tirana.⁹⁶

To conclude, in many ways the Gülenist movement in the Balkans has managed to imbed itself into the fabric of each society, as opposed to its former mission of serving the Turkish state as an educational ambassador. This has served the group well, and perhaps, Muslim Balkan leaders see the Gülenists as protecting their nation’s moderate Islamic strains against more radical Islamic sects that would deepen rifts in the already fragile ethnic balance existing today. As Turkey itself has proclaimed it does not wish to be the regional hegemon, but rather a regional player, the Balkan states in question more than likely see no point in upsetting this status quo further by following through on Erdogan’s demands. This argument even holds true in Kosovo, which has been a large recipient of Turkish funds since 2008. Due to the deep cultural connections with the local Albanian population and Erdogan’s relationship with President Thaçi, it was seen as a prime country for Erdogan to carry out his anti-Gülenist measures.

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Gladstone, Rick. 2018. “Turkish Secret Agents Seized 80 People in 18 Countries, Official Says.” *The New York Times*, April 5, 2018, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/05/world/europe/turkey-coup-arrests-extraditions.html>.

⁹⁶ McLaughlin, Daniel. “Erdogan's Enemies in the Balkans Fear Turkey's Growing Reach.” *The Irish Times*. *The Irish Times*, October 26, 2019. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/erdogan-s-enemies-in-the-balkans-fear-turkey-s-growing-reach-1.4061752>.

Chapter V – Media coverage on the deportation of Gülenists from Kosovo and the Effects of the deportations on the Kosovo-Turkish Relationship

5.1 – Overview of the Gülenist Deportations

Kosovo has felt the pressure to bend to Turkey's demands from both an economic and cultural perspective. According to the online news source Kosovo 2.0, an estimated 18,000 Turks possess Kosovo citizenship.⁹⁷ Turkey has heavily invested in Kosovo's international airport in Prishtina, enlisted the US-Turkish company Bechtel-Enka to construct a EUR 700-800 million highway connecting Kosovo to Albania, and Erdogan's son-in-law runs Kosovo's electricity distribution company.⁹⁸ Erdogan has, furthermore, asked Kosovo to remove material that portrays the Ottoman Empire in a negative light from its academic textbooks, and Turkish television and Soap Operas work to enhance the Ottoman past in the country.⁹⁹ Along with this, TIKA has invested into the fields of agricultural, medical, and historical reconstructions.¹⁰⁰ This approach has reaped benefits for both parties, but it also shows the dependency that the Kosovo government has on Turkey, in many cases more so than other Western Balkan states.

This dependence has arguably led to Erdogan being able to make demands that are unusual coming from a foreign head of state. These include significant textbook reforms, and the constant requests to hand over suspected Gülenists. These requests have been free flowing since Erdogan's falling out with Gülen in 2013, but Kosovo, to date, was the first and now one of the only European countries other than Bulgaria and Moldova to actively work with Turkey in deporting suspected Gülenists. This leads into the discussion surrounding the deportation case in March, 2018.

According to multiple sources, five teachers and one doctor of Turkish descent; Cihan Ozkan, Kahraman Demirez, Hasan Huseyin Gunakan, Mustafa Erdem, Osman Karakaya and

⁹⁷ Fazliu, Eraldin. "Signs of Strain in Kosovo-Turkey Relations - Kosovo 2.0Kosovo 2.0." Kosovo 2.0, October 19, 2016. <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/signs-of-strain-in-kosovo-turkey-relations/>.

⁹⁸ Xhambazi, Visar. "Erdogan Views Kosovo as a Neo-Ottoman Vassal State." New Eastern Europe - A bimonthly news magazine dedicated to Central and Eastern European affairs, May 10, 2018. <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/05/10/erdogan-views-kosovo-neo-ottoman-vassal-state/>.

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

Yusuf Karabina were taken into custody by the Kosovo AKI and Turkish MIT intelligence services on March 29, 2018. According to later reports, Gunakan was mistaken for Hasan Huseyin Demir, but was still deported with the knowledge of the Kosovo government.¹⁰¹ Yusuf Karabina's wife, Yasemin Karabina stated that she saw intelligence officers put her son in a chokehold, and her husband in handcuffs after being pulled over as they were on their way to work in Lipjan, Kosovo. The scene was later confirmed via video surveillance.¹⁰² In less than 24 hours, the six members were flown to Turkey and imprisoned in Silivri prison outside Istanbul, with the men being accused of being senior members in the Gülenist movement and recruiting members and assisting Turks looking to flee the country.¹⁰³ Perhaps somewhat ironically, less than a week later, Turkish national Urgur Toksoy was granted asylum in Kosovo following his extradition procedures being terminated by the State Prosecution, further adding to the general confusion within the government ranks.¹⁰⁴

The following reports indicate that despite Kosovo officials denying knowledge of the situation, including both Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and President Thaçi, that the Interior Ministry was aware of the details 17 days in advance.¹⁰⁵ According to a report compiled by US Human rights expert Tienmu Ma, "On 12 and 19 March, 2018, a senior official from the AKI went personally to the Department for Citizenship, Asylum and Migration [DCAM] in the Ministry of Interior to review the records of six Turkish nationals."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, a March, 2019 report summarized that the AKI was involved in the operation, with the report indicating that former AKI head Driton Gashi was present at the airport during the ID checks of the Turks.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the biggest indicator of possible collaboration was the Ministry of Internal

¹⁰¹ Morina, Die, and Arta Sopi. "Kosovo 'Knowingly' Deported Wrong Man to Turkey." Prishtina Insight, March 12, 2019. <https://prishtinainsight.com/14875-2/>.

¹⁰² Pulitzercenter. "Turkey's Puppet': How Erdogan's Anti-Gülenist Campaign Is Roiling Kosovo." Pulitzer Center, September 12, 2018. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkeys-puppet-how-erdogans-anti-gulenist-campaign-roiling-kosovo>.

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Leposhtica, Labinot. "Kosovo Grants Asylum to Turkish National." Prishtina Insight, April 6, 2018. <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-grants-asylum-turkish-national/>.

¹⁰⁵ Morina, Die. "Ankara Indicts Six Turks Deported from Kosovo." Balkan Insight, March 19, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/03/13/ankara-indicts-six-turks-deported-from-kosovo/>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Morina, Die, and Arta Sopi. "Former Kosovo Intelligence Chief 'Observed' Turks Being Deported." Balkan Insight, March 25, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/03/08/former-kosovo-intelligence-chief-observed-turks-being-deported/>.

Affairs' decision to revoke the residence permits of those arrested the same day, citing "national security" as the primary reason without elaborating further.¹⁰⁸

The aftermath saw Haradinaj signing forms for the resignations of both Gashi and Interior Minister, Flamur Sefaj, and the opening of investigations into the police force and others involved. While Haradinaj argued that the Kosovo police were not to blame for the incident, an August, 2019 report by the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo (IPK) sent to the Kosovo Special Prosecution Office implicated 22 police force members in the March, 2018 events.¹⁰⁹ In juxtaposition to these claims, a February, 2019 draft by Kosovo Parliamentary Commission members Xhelal Svecla and Driton Selmani was sent to the Kosovo Parliament, accusing President Thaçi, along with the AKI, of being the masterminds behind the deportations.¹¹⁰¹¹¹ To date, he remains in office, despite refusing to answer questions posed by the commission and resorting to taunting commission members.

Opposition party members further called for other top officials to be investigated, including the governors of the State Police, AKI, and the former Interior Minister Sefaj.¹¹² To date, three of the six Turkish nationals have been sentenced to 7-8 years in prison, on charges of belonging to an international terrorist group.¹¹³ As these sentences are far less than the prosecution's recommendation for sentences of 16-28 years,¹¹⁴ many across Kosovo, and the rest of the world, have accused Turkey of overstepping its bounds and improperly influencing the sentences.

¹⁰⁸ Osmani, Taulant. "Kosovo Revokes Arrested Turkish Nationals' Residence Permits for 'National Security'." Prishtina Insight, March 29, 2018. <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-revokes-arrested-turkish-nationals-residence-permits-national-security/>.

¹⁰⁹ Leposhitica, Labinot. "22 Police Staff Implicated in 'Gülenist' Deportation Case." Prishtina Insight, August 15, 2019. <https://prishtinainsight.com/22-police-staff-gulenist-deportation-case/>.

¹¹⁰ Sopi, Arta. "President Thaci behind Deportation of Gülenists Say Members of Parliamentary Commission." Prishtina Insight, May 15, 2019. <https://prishtinainsight.com/president-thaci-behind-deportation-of-gulenists-say-members-of-parliamentary-commission/>.

¹¹¹ Morina, Die, and Arta Sopi. "Kosovo Intelligence Agency Led 'Illegal' Deportations, MPs Say," March 8, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/03/07/kosovo-intelligence-agency-led-illegal-deportations-mps-say/>.

¹¹² Isufi, Perparim. "Kosovo MPs Say Deportation Probe Must Include Top Officials." Balkan Insight, August 16, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/16/kosovo-mps-say-deportation-probe-must-include-top-officials/>.

¹¹³ Sopi, Arta, and Aferdita Fejzullahu. "Turkish National Arrested in Kosovo Sentenced to Eight Years in Prison." Prishtina Insight, January 28, 2020. <https://prishtinainsight.com/turkish-national-arrested-in-kosovo-sentenced-to-eight-years-in-prison/>.

¹¹⁴ Morina, Die. "Ankara Indicts Six Turks Deported from Kosovo." Balkan Insight, March 19, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/03/13/ankara-indicts-six-turks-deported-from-kosovo/>.

To conclude the section, the events surrounding March 29, 2018, are still unresolved. While there are reports indicating sections of the Kosovo government were likely involved in the deportations, many individuals have emerged unscathed. President Thaçi still remains in office despite widespread claims of his involvement, and both Sefaj and Gashi remain in the higher echelons of the Kosovo government. It is difficult to dispute that the AKI was one of the perpetrators, with members taking over police roles and leading the operation until the Turkish nationals were safely out of the country. Erdogan helped enhance this argument, stating in an address the day after the deportations took place with Turkish intelligence acting “in coordination with Kosovo intelligence.”¹¹⁵ Thaçi also concurred with this account, admitting that the Turks were “deported” with the government’s knowledge because of their “illegal actions.”¹¹⁶

The media at both the domestic and international level were quick to delve into the situation, and many journalists have been challenged by the Turkish government’s rhetoric campaign to justify their actions. The next section will analyze the media discourse surrounding the Gülenist deportations, as well as how local journalists in the Kosovo media portrayed the coup attempt in Turkey. By analyzing the local journalists’ responses to the coup, it also is easier to decipher the general mood towards Erdogan and his motives in Kosovo and the Western Balkans as a whole.

5.2 – Media Discourse Analysis

As seen in the discourse surrounding the coup attempt, both the media and government in Kosovo looked to maintain their ability to act independently throughout both the situation and aftermath. Later, the ability to function as independent actors became extremely difficult, especially following the Gülenist deportations. While the Kosovo government has insisted that such actions were perpetrated by individual parties, the media appears to have seen this as a game of smoke and mirrors. As said by Naddaff, “The March expulsions attracted intense media scrutiny, both domestically and internationally.”¹¹⁷ After analyzing over 30 international and domestic sources regarding the deportations, the discourse can be divided into two strains; the

¹¹⁵ Naddaff, AJ. “Turkey’s Puppet: How Erdogan’s Anti-Gülenist Campaign Is Roiling Kosovo.” Pulitzer Center, September 12, 2018. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkeys-puppet-how-erdogans-anti-gulenist-campaign-roiling-kosovo>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Naddaff, AJ. “Turkey’s Puppet: How Erdogan’s Anti-Gülenist Campaign Is Roiling Kosovo.” Pulitzer Center, September 12, 2018. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkeys-puppet-how-erdogans-anti-gulenist-campaign-roiling-kosovo>.

international media covered the incident itself along with the potential implications it had for the Turkish-Kosovo relationship, while the domestic sources were much more invested in the entire process, dubbing the deportations as a “kidnapping.”¹¹⁸

Due to the local Kosovo media lacking a plethora of local English sources discussing the coup attempt, it is logical to look at a case involving Kosovo Journalist and editor of *Gazeta Express*, Berat Buzhala. During the ongoing coup attempt, Buzhala took to Twitter, stating that, “I invite the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo who are holidaying in Turkey to align with the army” and later calling Erdogan a “thief” and lambasting the Erdogan regimes curtailing of freedom of press in Turkey following the coup’s failure.¹¹⁹ At the time, Buzhala had an estimated 40,000 Twitter followers. It was reported on July 26, 2016, that the Turkish embassy in Prishtina sent a note to the Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting that Buzhala receive legal action against him as stipulated by Kosovo law (6 months to 5 years for citizens taking part in armed conflicts outside the country).¹²⁰

As a result of the note, several parties in Kosovo responded almost immediately, both from the media and from the government itself. The Association of Journalists demanded an apology from the embassy, and the resignation of Turkish Ambassador Kivilcim Kilic, stating that, “We consider the Turkish Embassy’s request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take action against said journalist to be a major violation.”¹²¹ In an interview for Radio Free Europe, Foreign Minister Enver Hoxaj stated that the request was “unusual” and “unacceptable,” further portraying the Turkish response as “an overreaction of the Turkish Embassy in Prishtina.”¹²² Hoxaj, along with Buzhala, maintained that the comments were satirical in nature, which were later upheld by Kosovo Chief Prosecutor Aleksander Lumezi.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Bytyci, Fatos. “Six Turks Arrested in Kosovo over Gulen Links Extradited to Turkey: Anadolu.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, March 29, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kosovo/kosovo-arrests-six-turks-over-links-to-gulen-schools-police-idUSKBN1H51JL>.

¹¹⁹ Osmani, Taulant. “Journalists Condemn Turkey's Request to Punish Kosovo Journalist over Coup Comments.” Prishtina Insight, July 29, 2016. <https://prishtinainsight.com/journalists-condemn-turkeys-request-punish-kosovo-journalist-coup-comments/>.

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² “Kosovo Foreign Minister: Turkey's Request Is Unacceptable,” Prishtina Insight, July 28, 2016, <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-foreign-minister-turkeys-request-unacceptable/>.

¹²³ Ibid

These strains are logical. Both Kosovo and Turkey have applied to the EU, and as such, are held accountable by EU standards. New sources such as Radio Free Europe, Pulitzer Center, AP News, and the Irish Times all included or hinted at this concept within their reporting on the matter. In many cases it can be said that while Kosovo was put under the microscope, Turkey as a member of the Council of Europe and a potential EU member, has been seen by the international crowd as being the main actor pressuring the small Balkan country. As stated by EU Spokeswoman Maja Kocijanic, “As for Turkey, while we understand the need to bring the culprits of the coup attempt...to justice, any alleged wrongdoing or crime should be subject to due process and well established international norms when seeking extradition.”¹²⁴ However, Kosovo’s lack of legal proceedings and human rights in the affair have been viewed negatively by the EU community, with whom Kosovo is aspiring to merge.

Another small, but noticeable detail was the media’s discussions surrounding Erdogan and the Turkish-Kosovo relationship both before and following the deportation case. New Eastern Europe, EURACTIV, and the Pulitzer along with local Kosovo sources Prishtina Insight and Kosovo 2.0 engaged in discussions revolving around Erdogan’s outlook on the Western Balkans and the resulting campaign to return Gülenists to Turkey. As he assured AKP party members at an April 7, 2018, rally, “We will chase them no matter where they flee,” which reflects the influence the Turkish MIT has on the Turkish diaspora.¹²⁵ While this statement by Erdogan has certainly held true in many locations across the world, it appears that the Kosovo case has been met with the most criticism from both media sources and international organizations. This is based on the sheer amount of coverage it received and the almost blatant disregard for secrecy that both parties displayed during the operation.

In contrast, the local Kosovo media and sources whose coverage of the Western Balkans was evaluated, have appeared to take a keen interest in Erdogan’s dealings in the region, especially following the coup attempt in 2016 which allowed for increased pressure on Gülenists across the globe. Kosovo was one of the states that Gülenists considered a ‘haven,’ due to the perceived

¹²⁴ Rfe/rl, “EU Criticizes Kosovo, Turkey Over Deportation of Six Erdogan Political Foes,” RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, April 4, 2018), <https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-criticizes-kosovo-turky-over-deportation-six-erdogan-political-foes/29144413.html>.

¹²⁵ Gotev, Georgi. “Erdogan Vows to Bring Back Gülenists from Abroad.” www.euractiv.com. EURACTIV.com, April 10, 2018. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/erdogan-vows-to-bring-back-gulenists-from-abroad/>.

historical and cultural ties. A civil servant maintained this stance in a January 2018 interview, pointing out the fact that,

“we share a 500-year history with Kosovo. Kosovo confirmed our impressions that we can adapt easily here, due to the warm reaction of people when they see Turks, and the historical and cultural familiarity.”¹²⁶

The arrest and eventual acquittal of alleged Gülenist Urgur Toksoy, in December 2017, was covered by both Prishtina Insight and Balkan Insight, with both highlighting Kosovo’s difficult road of trying to appease the EU and US and Turkey. As said in a Balkan Insight article regarding Toksoy, “Kosovo had two options – to follow the suit of EU and US that have refused such extradition requests, or to follow Ankara’s wishes and extradite Toksoy.”¹²⁷

The coverage of the Gülenist deportations reflected the general attitude of the many journalists in English-speaking Kosovo media, towards Turkey’s actions. This is in line with the Association of Journalists’ defense of Berat Bushala’s anti-Erdogan rhetoric during the coup attempt. As opposed to simply reporting the March, 2018 deportation case, both Prishtina Insight and Balkan Insight covered the following committee reports regarding the AKI, Kosovo police force, and individuals potentially involved. Prishtina Insight, along with Kosovo 2.0 were the only available sources that addressed the wrongful arrest of Hasan Gunakan by local authorities. The Kosovo political opposition’s call for investigations into key individuals were only mentioned in Balkan Insight. Kosovo 2.0 ran an article in January, 2020 titled *Two Years, No Justice for Deported Turkish Teachers*, which discussed the deportations, and the current situation for the Turks still in prison despite the current COVID-19 situation.

To conclude this analysis, the most difficult aspect of this review was the limited English resources at the local level, turning up only information from three English speaking sources (Prishtina Insight, Balkan Insight, and Kosovo 2.0) pertaining to the failed coup and the Gülenist deportations, and four sources discussing Turkish influence in Kosovo (the latter two, Gazeta Express, and Kosovo 2.0.) However, taking this into account, these sources were very thorough when discussing the deportations in addition to the proceedings that followed and can be relied upon for this section of the Thesis. The international media was generally broader in its analysis,

¹²⁶ Xharra, Jeta. “Gülenists’ Talk about Finding a Safe Haven in Kosovo.” Prishtina Insight, January 11, 2018. <https://prishtinainsight.com/gulenists-talk-finding-safe-haven-kosovo-mag/>.

¹²⁷ Morina, Die. “Kosovo Faces Dilemma Over Turkish Extradition Demand,” Balkan Insight, November 4, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/11/04/kosovo-faces-dilemma-over-turkish-extradition-demand-11-03-2017/>.

with the details being limited to the actual deportations themselves, but also looking at how the international community perceived both states' actions. These international sources were vital to this section.

The findings stated above are, in some ways, predictable. While Erdogan's actions in the Western Balkans have attracted increased scrutiny since 2016, the lack of a more thorough analysis at the international level was unsurprising. This is not a region that generally receives front page news coverage. While Turkey is not the primary hegemon in the region, from a historical and cultural perspective, it is an important actor that utilizes these past legacies to the fullest, and Erdogan's calls for states to deport potential Gülenists only have continued to grow.

5.3 – Turkey-Kosovo Relationship going Forward

It can be argued that even before the deportation case, Turkey's actions have been viewed with skepticism by Kosovo. Erdogan's "Turkey is Kosovo, Kosovo is Turkey" quote in 2013 in Prizren (home to Kosovo's largest Turkish community), is a reflection of how Turkey views the small Balkan nation; one with considerable ties to Turkey due to its Ottoman past and current economic dependence on Turkey. The 2016 coup attempt was a critical moment when this close relationship started to strain. Due to Buzhala's Twitter and Facebook remarks portraying Erdogan in a negative light, and the following verbal war between Turkish Ambassador Kilic and Kosovo Journalists, many in Kosovo viewed Turkey's requests as inappropriate. According to well-known columnist Enver Robelli regarding the exchange, "Perhaps from the reaction of our public opinion, the Turkish ambassador understood that Kosovars respect Turkey, but they [Kosovars] are not ready to sacrifice the freedom of press for the vices of Turkish diplomacy."¹²⁸

The ongoing attempts of Erdogan to whitewash the Ottoman Empire's treatment of ethnic Albanians (thousands of whom were deported or arrested for supporting Albanian independence and for speaking the Albanian language), by insisting that the Ottomans not be called "occupiers" in academic textbooks, has also done much to negatively influence the local population's views of Turkey. Robelli also commented on this, arguing that while Turkey has a

¹²⁸ Fazliu, Eraldin. "Signs of Strain in Kosovo-Turkey Relations - Kosovo 2.0Kosovo 2.0." Kosovo 2.0, October 19, 2016. <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/signs-of-strain-in-kosovo-turkey-relations/>.

right to be proud of their history, “Ankara’s politicians should be aware that the vast majority of Albanians in the Balkans cannot be proud of a Turkish history that spits on and neglects Albanian history.”¹²⁹

Moving forward, the 2017 arrest of suspected Gülenist Ugur Toksoy sent shockwaves through the country, as it marked the first time a Balkan country arrested a Turkish educator for suspected Gülenist links. While Toksoy was eventually released due to a lack of evidence, analyst Besir Bajrami considered the action an example of “diplomatic aggression” as many saw the arrest as a political move.¹³⁰ This tension increased due to the deportations, with both the international community and the Kosovo Turkish community expressing concern due to the perceived breach of both Kosovo law and international human rights laws. Following Prime Minister Haradinaj’s denial of involvement and sacking of AKI director Gashi and Internal Affairs Minister Sefaj, Erdogan responded harshly, criticizing Haradinaj of “harboring terrorists.”¹³¹ President Thaçi has been more reserved, which may be due to his strong relationship with Erdogan. This is ironic, as Thaçi has slated himself as playing a key role in Kosovo’s international foreign policy. To have Erdogan openly continue to threaten further actions similar to the deportation case is cause for the country to feel further tension, going forward.

This silence has shown that despite criticism from the international community and members of Kosovo’s civil society, Kosovo has forgiven Turkey’s interference too easily. As argued by Nektar Zogiani of Balkan Insight, “Although the deportation “incident” triggered harsh reactions in Kosovo, the story was eventually overshadowed by other regional and global developments, quickly heading towards collective oblivion.”¹³² Considering Kosovo has protected itself in other instances, such as the 2018 arrest of five Serbs accused of pressuring members of the Kosovo Security force, it is odd that Kosovo has done relatively little in response to Turkey’s actions.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Xharra, Jeta, and Faith Bailey. “Heightened Anxieties in Kosovo after Arrest of 'Gülenist Educator'.” Prishtina Insight, December 15, 2017. <https://prishtinainsight.com/heightened-anxieties-kosovo-arrest-gulenist-educator-mag/>.

¹³¹ Fazliu, Eraldin. “Insecurity over Turkish Deportations from Kosovo Remains.” Prishtina Insight, November 7, 2019. <https://prishtinainsight.com/insecurity-over-turkish-deportations-from-kosovo-remains-mag/>.

¹³² Zogiani, Nektar. “Kosovo Has Forgiven Turkey's Interference Too Easily.” Balkan Insight, July 23, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/07/23/kosovo-has-forgiven-turkey-s-interference-too-easily-07-19-2018/>.

¹³³ Ibid

While committees were formed, their proceedings have been stalled or outright ignored. Most of the perpetrators have remained in various positions of power, which may indicate that the proceedings were a mere show for the international and local communities.

Kosovo and Turkey also must consider the impact of the deportations upon their EU aspirations. This is especially important for Kosovo, who is still heavily dependent upon investments from the EU and US. Both Turkey and Kosovo broke numerous laws, especially legal protections focusing on extraditions and the forcible movement of humans across borders. Leutrim Sylja, lawyer to one of the six deported, Cihan Ozkan, argued that international law states that one cannot extradite people for political reasons, or if said people face the possibility of torture.¹³⁴ Amnesty International, as well as Human Rights Watch, have published reports outlining that torture and maltreatment of prisoners by police and prisons have become a pressing issue, especially for suspected Gülenists.¹³⁵

Many EU states, including Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Slovakia do not acknowledge Kosovo's sovereignty or their EU ascension. Because of this, Kosovo's international prestige took a deeper dive following the deportation case.¹³⁶ Considering Turkey's straying from the goals outlined by the EU, many have considered this period as crucial for Kosovo to choose between the two camps. For President Thaçi, who has close ties with Erdogan and who considers the EU style of governance as inhibiting, a move by Kosovo to step towards the EU camp would only worsen his position in power.¹³⁷ In 2017, a Gallup poll indicated 84% of Kosovars interviewed supported this move.

To conclude, in 2016, the Turkish-Kosovo relationship had weakened. Erdogan's increasing pressure on the Western Balkans to deport Gülenists and those suspected of "terrorist" behavior sent shockwaves across the region, and the deportations are a prime example of Erdogan's reach paying off. The international and local media sources who reported on the case were critical,

¹³⁴ Naddaff, AJ. "Turkey's Puppet: How Erdogan's Anti-Gülenist Campaign Is Roiling Kosovo." Pulitzer Center, September 12, 2018. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkeys-puppet-how-erdogans-anti-gulenist-campaign-roiling-kosovo>.

¹³⁵ "In Custody." Human Rights Watch, October 12, 2017.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/12/custody/police-torture-and-abductions-turkey>.

¹³⁶ Rettman, Andrew. 2018. "Spain Tells EU to Cut Kosovo from Enlargement Plan." EUobserver. January 30, 2018. <https://euobserver.com/enlargement/140771>.

¹³⁷ Naddaff, AJ. "Turkey's Puppet: How Erdogan's Anti-Gülenist Campaign Is Roiling Kosovo." Pulitzer Center, September 12, 2018. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkeys-puppet-how-erdogans-anti-gulenist-campaign-roiling-kosovo>.

with such titles as *Kosovo MPs Say Deportation Probe Must Include Top Officials*, and *Insecurity over Turkish Deportations from Kosovo Remains* dotting the local English language media landscape. However, perhaps due to other world events and circumstances in connection with Turkey's influence in Kosovo, the deportation case was quietly pushed to the wayside. As said by Nektar Zogiani in July 2018, "Kosovo may rely in part on Turkish goodwill – but it should not have forgotten so rapidly the recent, secretive and highly controversial deportation of six Turks from the country."¹³⁸ With all this in mind, support for the EU among Kosovars is a major potential pitfall for the pro-Turkish politicians, as Turkey's increasingly authoritarian style has pushed it further away from the EU. This is likely to force Kosovo to make a choice of whom to lean towards in the coming years.

VI – Conclusions

Turkey's role in the Western Balkans since the 1990s has seen a shift from cordiality to power broker. This can be attributed to the large amount of immigrations from the Balkans to Turkey from the 1920s – 1990s, with the number estimated to be around 1.6 million.¹³⁹ Along with that, Turkish officials have claimed that there are an estimated 10 million Balkan people of Turkish descent living in the Balkans.¹⁴⁰ Due to these increasing numbers, Turkey took on a more active role during the 1990s in support of the Muslim communities affected by the multiple wars that permeated the region, but it did so under the guise of NATO and the US. The AKP party led by Erdogan and then by advisor Ahmet Davutoğlu in the early 2000s maintained this vision. While there were difficulties with Christian Balkan states like Croatia and Serbia, Turkey was generally able to prioritize shared cultural and historical values with its former Ottoman holdings.

These policies evolved from 2009 onwards into what came to be known as neo-Ottomanism under Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister Davutoğlu. Davutoğlu prioritized relationships with Bosniaks and Albanians, the two major Muslim communities in the region. At the same time, Turkey also became a mediator of sorts between the former members of Yugoslavia, with

¹³⁸ Zogiani, Nektar. "Kosovo Has Forgiven Turkey's Interference Too Easily." *Balkan Insight*, July 23, 2018. <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/07/23/kosovo-has-forgiven-turkey-s-interference-too-easily-07-19-2018/>.

¹³⁹ Bulut, Esra. "'Friends, Balkans, Statesmen Lend Us Your Ears': The Trans-state and State in Links between Turkey and the Balkans", *Ethnopolitics* 5, no. 3 (30 November 2006): 309–26.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

talks being held in 2009 and 2010 between BiH, Croatia, Serbia, and Turkey. Increasing economic influence was also an issue that Davutoğlu looked to address, with 10% of Turkish FDI abroad being concentrated in the Balkans in 2011.¹⁴¹ This was combined with an increased verbal campaign emphasizing Turkey's ties with the region, and the corresponding inflow of Turkish television and news sources. Together, these actions comprised a solid push towards establishing Turkey as a regional player. Turkey, according to Turkish analysts, has not wanted to be the hegemon of the Western Balkans, but instead hoped to position itself as an important regional actor. Since Turkey still economically behind both the EU and China, this argument is plausible. Without certain economic advantages, Turkey would have a difficult time implementing any sort of hegemonic agenda. This period also saw the rise and fall of Erdogan's relationship with Gülen, with the two parties working in tandem to remove former Kemalists and those opposed to the AKP. This included the Gülenists, who filled the role of religious ambassador for Turkey until Gülen's fall from power in 2013.

This policy of neo-Ottomanism continued until Davutoğlu's removal in 2016, when Erdogan assumed the mantle of furthering Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans. This era has come to be called Erdoganism, and can be classified as one in which Erdogan has established personal ties with Balkan leaders and prioritized economic ties over cultural and historical ones. This may be somewhat misleading; the use of neo-Ottoman rhetoric as a means of facilitating dialogue, that is seen in Erdogan's attitude to Kosovo and BiH has lessened through the rest of the region. In fact, it is noticeably less than under Davutoğlu time in office. This could be due to Erdogan's relationship with Serbia, which has been increasingly normalized due to the personal relationship between him and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. However, this new policy has done little for Erdogan in his anti-Gülenist campaign in the Balkans, where only Bulgaria and Kosovo have complied to a certain degree.

While Erdogan has been calling for Balkan states to deport suspected Gülenists since 2013, the failed 2016 coup attempt is the catalyst which has given Erdogan fuel to proceed. As he has repeatedly accused Gülen of being the main perpetrator, roughly 80 Turkish citizens have been

¹⁴¹ United States Conference on Trade and Development, Investment Country Profiles: Turkey, UNCTAD/WEB/DIAE/IA/2012/6 (February 2012), quoted in Vračić, Alida. "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans - SWP," December 2016. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf

brought back to Turkey from 16 states around the world.¹⁴² The most-well known case to date has been the 2018 deportations from Kosovo, which saw the Kosovo AKI work with local police and the Turkish MIT to deport six suspected Gülenists back to Turkey.

The following discourse from both international and local media sources were critical of both Kosovo and Turkey, with local media sources outright claiming the operation constituted a “kidnapping.”¹⁴³ While the international media was less critical, their analysis covered the initial operation and the Kosovo-Turkish relationship since this point. In a broader context, the international and local media reactions to the case display an interesting paradigm in regards to the Turkish-Kosovo relationship; while the state’s actions were viewed as a breach of international law, Turkey’s influence in Kosovo has lessened the long-term damage. From an international viewpoint however, Kosovo faces an uphill battle when trying to accomplish some of its more important foreign policy objectives, such as joining the EU. According to Isuf Zejna, a co-founder and senior researcher at the Prishtina-based Democracy Plus organization, “As long as we are viewed as the Turkish puppet, the EU will not open the doors for us.”¹⁴⁴ Perhaps another idea to consider, is whether Turkey truly cares if the Western Balkans delves deeper into the Western camp. As said in earlier chapters, Turkey views itself as a major player in the region, but does not wish to be the hegemon

In line with this thought process, Kosovo soon may be forced to choose between Turkey and its European and US allies. Turkey has a strong foothold in the country, with control over much of Kosovo’s infrastructure and many ethnic Albanians residing within its borders, but statistics show Kosovo’s public wishes to strengthen ties to the EU. With Turkey moving closer to Russia due to diplomatic squabbles with its NATO allies and Erdogan’s authoritarian regime consolidating power, Kosovo may not be able to sit on the proverbial fence for long.

¹⁴² McLaughlin, Daniel. “Erdogan’s Enemies in the Balkans Fear Turkey’s Growing Reach.” *The Irish Times*. The Irish Times, October 26, 2019. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/erdogan-s-enemies-in-the-balkans-fear-turkey-s-growing-reach-1.4061752>.

¹⁴³ Bytyci, Fatos. “Six Turks Arrested in Kosovo over Gulen Links Extradited to Turkey: Anadolu.” *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, March 29, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kosovo/kosovo-arrests-six-turks-over-links-to-gulen-schools-police-idUSKBN1H51JL>.

¹⁴⁴ Naddaff, AJ. “Turkey’s Puppet’: How Erdogan’s Anti-Gülenist Campaign Is Roiling Kosovo.” *Pulitzer Center*, September 12, 2018. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkeys-puppet-how-erdogans-anti-gulenist-campaign-roiling-kosovo>.

“In what ways has the 2016 Coup d’état attempt in Turkey resonated in the Western Balkans, and how did the local and international media discourse portray the 2018 Gülenists extraditions from Kosovo to Turkey?” This question was asked as a means of attempting to substantiate the theory that Turkey uses its cultural, economic, religious, and political influence in the Western Balkans to foster popularity and to exert itself in regional affairs. It is clear that while Turkey is not the sole hegemony in the region, its renewed interest in the Western Balkans has certainly bore fruit, as seen during the 2018 deportation case in Kosovo. However, Erdogan in the eyes of many, has caused unease among the Turkish community in Kosovo, drawn the ire of local media outlets, and has continually bullied Kosovo to adapting to historical discourses favorable to Turkey. If Kosovo chooses to take a step towards the EU and US, the Kosovo electorate would have to make the difficult decision to remove pro-Turkey individuals such as President Thaçi from power. This may be a tough pill to swallow considering Turkey’s current position in the country. This question is not one that is easily resolved, but Kosovo’s balancing act between different political, ethnic, and historical ideologies may prove strenuous to maintain. Tough choices will have to be made in the near future in order for change to come to fruition.

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M. A. THESIS – PROJECT
Name: Ryan Day
E-mail: Ryan.day989@gmail.com
Date: 31/07/20
Title: The 2016 Coup d'état Attempt in Turkey and its Impact in Kosovo: A Look into the Media Discourse Surrounding the 2018 Gülenist Extraditions and the Resulting Turkish-Kosovo Relationship
Expected term of defence (semester, academic year): Summer semester, academic year 2019-2020
Instructor of the M. A. Thesis Seminar: Doc. PhDr. Jiří Vykoukal, CSc.
Supervisor: PhDr. Ondřej Žíla, Ph.D.
Substantiation (5 lines): Following the July 2016 coup d'état attempt in Turkey, an estimated 241 people were killed and 2,194 were injured. The Turkish government in the following months came to blame the attempted coup on Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish businessman with and preacher with former ties to Erdogan who has lived in the US since 1999, and his followers. In March 2018, 6 suspected Gülenists were deported from Kosovo with the help of the Kosovo intelligence service (AKI), reportedly without Prime Minister Rasmush Haradinaj being informed. This paper looks to analyze three factors; Turkey's constantly changing influence since the 1990s in the Western Balkans, consider the failed 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and the anti-Gülenist campaign by Erdogan in the region (with Kosovo as the focus), and to delve into the international and local media discourse surrounding the deportations of suspected Gülenist from Kosovo with the help of Turkish intelligence on March 29, 2018.
Expected outcome (5 lines): The research holds that while the media discourse displayed Kosovo and Turkey's actions in the deportation case as being in violation of international law, the issue was quickly swept away from the spotlight due to Turkey's influence in Kosovo and other global issues at the time period.
Key concept (10 lines): This paper analyzes the role of <i>soft power</i> and <i>hard power</i> in the deportation case to exert itself in Kosovo. This <i>soft power</i> can be discussed in <i>economic, cultural, political, and religious</i> terms. These concepts fall under the concepts of <i>Ottomanism</i> (looking and advocating the Ottoman past as a time of prosperity), and <i>Neo-Ottomanism</i> , or the idea that Turkey is promoting itself in regions that previously fell under the Ottoman empire. The newest concept is <i>Erdoganism</i> , which can be said to have started in 2016, and can be described as Erdogan's attempts at forging diplomatic ties with key Western Balkan leaders as a means of expanding his regional influence. This paper uses mainly <i>qualitative</i> methods in the form of a analytical media discourse by using international and local media sources, and discusses the role of <i>soft power</i> by using discourse outlined in research published from Think Tanks and Governments on the discussion. The author uses <i>quantitative</i> method by using showing statistics from the sources mentioned previously to show Turkey's role in the region since the 1990s and how the 2018 deportation case affected the Turkish-Kosovo relationship.
structure (10 lines):
Chapter I – Introduction
Chapter II – Literature Review and Methodology
2.1 Literature Review – Turkish Influence in the Balkans: 1990s – Present Era
2.2 Literature Review – The 2016 Coup d' etat Attempt
2.3 Literature Review – Who Are the Gülenists and the Crisis in Kosovo
2.4 - Methodology
Chapter III - Background on Turkish Influence in the Western Balkans from the 1990s-Present Era
3.1 - Turkey's Inroads in the Western Balkans in the 1990s – 2009
3.2 – Turkey's Davutoğlu led Neo-Ottoman era in the Western Balkans 2009 – 2016

3.3 – 2016 to Current Era: A look at Erdoganism and Pragmatism

Chapter IV – The July 15, 2016 Coup Attempt in Turkey and an Overview of Gülenism and its Impact in the Western Balkans

4.1 – July 15, 2016: The Events Surrounding the Coup and the Aftermath

4.2 – Gülenists: Terrorist Group or Humanitarian Foundation?

4.3- Gülenist's Role in the Western Balkans

Chapter V – Media coverage on the deportation of Gülenists from Kosovo and the Effects of the deportations on the Kosovo-Turkish Relationship

5.1 – Overview of the Gülenist Deportations

5.2 – Media Discourse Analysis

5.3 – Turkey-Kosovo Relationship going Forward

VI – Conclusions

Bibliography

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