

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the aspects of neo-Ottomanism in Turkish foreign policies toward three Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo –, focusing on the developments of the last decade. Turkey has become quite active in the Balkans and in these countries in the last few years, however, this activism is not without any antecedents. These areas were the core European territories of the Ottoman Empire and after the dissolution of this entity, Turkey still attached special importance to these countries, albeit during the Cold War relations were cooler. On the other hand, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the rise of the AK Party to government position and Ahmet Davutoglu becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, the Balkans started to receive particular “limelight” in Turkish foreign policy. New ideas, expressions, approaches were incorporated into the forming self-confident and assertive foreign policy of Turkey. However, this new policy, referred to as neo-Ottomanism in many cases, inferred criticisms too, from the West and from local politicians in the Balkans too. The thesis aims to remake and remodel this expression by highlighting other, more positive elements of it. Turkey’s political, economic, cultural and military relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are developing at an unprecedented pace these days but the Ottoman past and ethnic divisions cast doubts in some occasions on Turkey’s intentions. Nonetheless, economy is more and more becoming the driving factor in relations, with Turkish investments soaring in these countries. In addition, the perception of the Ottoman past is also changing in these countries, with major shifts in some states in favour of Turkish involvement. However, the increased relations with Turkey remain highly debated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where this issue is also in connection with the country’s ethnic division. All four countries aim at EU membership, but there are various obstacles which set back their progress. The implications of the fading fast membership progress pushes Turkey and the other three countries for enhanced cooperation, mainly in the field of economy, to get the most out of bilateral – and multilateral – relations. The thesis attempts to highlight that most of the factors of the current Turkish foreign policy in this region underline the approach of neo-Ottomanism, however, this approach is more beneficiary than disadvantageous for all sides and the involved actors observe Turkish approximation mostly positively.