

The Aspects of Neo-Ottomanism in Turkish

Foreign Policies toward Albania, Bosnia

and Herzegovina and Kosovo

Gergely Nagy

Reviewed by Emil Souleimanov

The MA thesis of Gergely Nagy is an outcome of original research that has been carried out by the author for months taking advantage of field trips to Turkey, researching a host of related sources, and staying in constant touch with myself as the supervisor of the present research thesis, and a number of Turkish experts and academics, as well.

First and foremost, I appreciate the author's courage to pick up a topic that has been widely discussed, yet still underresearched. The aspects of neo-Ottomanism have indeed come to play an increasing role in the realm of Turkish foreign policies (FP) of the last decade, yet no substantial effort was as of yet taken by either Western or Turkish students of FP to author a (serious) study that would address this issue with regard to Albania, BiH and Kosovo. Obviously, the topic is a highly complex one as it touches on the centuries long and rather underresearched niveau of Turco-Albanian and Turco-Bošnjak relationships, a niveau that has been overwhelmed by the polarity of pro-Turkish and anti-Turkish sentiments based on the general attitude to the Ottoman past that is being forged out in both Albanian and Bošnjak-dominated areas of the Balkan regions. Indeed, ethno-nationalist approaches related to defining the nature of their own identity following centuries of Ottoman domination have prevailed in the internal discourses within Albania/Kosova and BiH, and I appreciate that the author has addressed (in an unbiased fashion) the historical background of that highly complex relationship from both within and outside. Importantly, and this, too, should be stressed, the author draws on a wide range of empirical knowledge that enables him to portray the image of Turco-Albanian and Turco-Bosnian affairs with regard to the aspects of neo-Ottomanism.

While researching the subject (and the reviewed study to that end) one might be lacking specific references to neo-Ottomanism in the making of Turkish FP vis-à-vis the area in question, yet it is important to understand that the Turkish policy-makers as such have been highly reluctant to include those verbalities in an effort to stay away from any accusations of a neo-colonialist approach toward the region; and even so, this self-containment has not been convicting for at least some of commentators. Yet a potential reproof that no neo-Ottomanism as such (as it is nowhere self-identified as such by Ankara's official) is being focused on throughout the study would to my view be pointless as, with regard to the above specification, this is something that should be read impliedly; nonetheless, it constitutes the core of Turkish FP toward its former colonies as the legace of Ottoman past is beign reflected by Turkish policy-makers and, as we have seen, neo-Ottomanism has been widely recognized as an integral part of Turkish FP toward what was once called as Pax Ottomanica.

All in all, I deem the study a success and suggest that an A mark is given to the author. I personally ask thr author to consider its publication. I would also like to suggest that the present MA is passed further to the dean's appraisal (dėkanovi na pochvalu).

Emil Souleimanov