Turkey's Soft Power Policies in the Occupied Areas of Cyprus and the Balkans: Objectives, Agents, and Implications

(Part B)

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Turkey's Soft Power Policies in the Occupied Areas of Cyprus and the Balkans: Objectives, Agents, and Implications (Part B)*

II. An Overview of Turkey's Soft Power in the Balkans

> **The removal of geopolitical barriers following the end of the Cold War prompted Turkey to reappear on the Balkan centre-stage by gaining over the "hearts and minds" of the threatened Muslim communities.**

This section examines Turkey's soft power activism with relation to experiences from Turkey's soft power initiatives in the Balkans, mainly in BiH and Kosovo.

Turkey's soft-power activism in the Balkans is generally shaped by AKP's foreign policy perception of the Balkans as the former Ottoman hinterland.[1]

The geographic proximity of the region ("near abroad") and its ethno-demographic composition with its distinctive cultural and religious traits, make the region particularly important for Turkey. Lying within "Europe's backyard", the region is comprised by a volatile mixture of western influence and orient tradition, which turned historically into the epicentre of numerous bloody confrontations. The "borderland position" of the Balkans and its complex ethno-demographic mixture has historically stirred up confrontational ethnic and imperial claims, and thus it has created opportunities for third party influence and interference. The removal of geopolitical barriers following the end of the Cold War, prompted Turkey to reappear on the Balkan centre-stage by gaining over the "hearts and minds" of the threatened Muslim communities and widening its economic and political sphere of influence through the restoration of its patrimonial cultural and

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[1] Hakan Ovunc Ongur (2015). "Identifying Ottomanisms: The Discursive Evolution of Ottoman Pasts in the Turkish Presents". Middle Eastern Studies, 51(3): 416-432

religious ties in the region. Again, persisting regional tensions and insecurity among the Balkan Muslim populations paved the way for Turkey's re-entrance into the Balkans as the moral and political champion of Muslimhood in the region.

Therefore, to some it seems that "while Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs have Croatia and Serbia as their "mother states" supporting them, Bosniaks mostly rely on Turkey".[2]

During the early 90s in BiH, Turkey had fervently supported the independence of the Bosnian Yugoslav state, mobilised to attract the attention of western powers to undertake military action, and began secretly sending weapons to Bosnian Muslims. Whenever there was difficulty for Western mediators reaching out to the Bosnian Muslims, Turkey assisted with mediation initiatives by either organizing meetings or advising the organizers (The truce in Mostar etc). Turkish troops participated in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), joined the UN-led NATO mission Operation Deliberate Force (1995) and contributed to IFOR/SFOR/EUFOR with large numbers of troops.

At a first glance, unlike the so-called "TRNC", which clearly falls in the category of externally dependant non-recognized entities, result of violent secession (protectorate), BiH is a legally recognized multi-ethnic and multi-religious independent federal state. Nonetheless, this says little about BiH's real "independency potential", which is actually reduced by an institutionalised pursuit of narrow ethno-territorial political interests. Prolonged insecurities and deep-cutting fragmentations have sharpened the divisions, thus causing critical dysfunctions.

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[2] Sakin, Ubeydullah (2017). Turkey's Soft Power Strategy: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thesis. Istanbul Sehir University, Available at:
http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/39710/000130188002.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Turkey's new foreign policy framework treats the Balkans as an area particularly conducive to its foreign policy interests: a geopolitical terrain upon which Turkey meets Europe, a historical front line abundant with symbolisms, cultural ties, common traditions, and opportunities. Interestingly, Davutoğlu himself has called upon the Turkish leadership (AKP) to take into account "the historical responsibilities towards the Balkans".[3]

> Turkey's reconnection with the local Turkish minorities in the Balkans (Sandjak Turks in Serbia, Turks in Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia), but even more importantly with the larger Muslim populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosniaks), Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bulgaria, is a fundamental element in Davutoğlu's foreign policy doctrine.

Besides, Davutoğlu argued that Turkey should build its Balkans policy around the two important Muslim peoples of the region: Bosniaks and Albanians.[4] Turkey's reconnection with the local Turkish minorities in the Balkans (Sandjak Turks in Serbia, Turks in Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia), but even more importantly with the larger Muslim populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosniaks), Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bulgaria, is a fundamental element in Davutoğlu's foreign policy doctrine.[5] This religious keen population across the Balkans, no matter its specific ethnic origin, is believed to constitute the most dynamic agent of Ottoman Muslim tradition. In his book, Davutoğlu explains, "efforts of the two main Ottoman remainders in the

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[3] Murinson, Alexander (2006). "The Strategic Depth Doctrine in Turkish Foreign Policy". Middle Eastern Studies, 42 (6): 945–96.

[4] Demirta, Birgü (2015). "Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: A Europeanized Foreign Policy in a De-Europeanized National Context?" Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 17(2), 123-140.

[5] Yenigün, C. & Gjana, F. (2011). (eds), Balkans: Foreign Affairs, Politics and Socio-Cultures. Epoka University Press, Tirana.

Balkans, Bosniaks and Albanians, to survive as independent entities require the promotion of shared historical and cultural ties between these natural allies and Turkey.[6]

In Davutoğlu's words, "As a matter of fact, the Balkans had its golden age of peace during the Ottoman reign. Turkey, [however] has already forgotten the hierarchical relations of history [in the Balkans], but resurrected and reinvented the common culture, mentality and interests of history."[7] Davutoğlu highlights that "in contrast to the European Union's imperious policies in the Balkans, Turkey seeks to develop a "relation of equals" with the Balkan states and aims at lasting peace and stability."[8]

The main argument beneath these statements, and one that influences Turkish foreign policy in the region, suggests an understanding of peace, order and liberalism connected to the Ottoman past. In a famous speech during a visit in Sarajevo in 2009, Davutoğlu highlighted that: "Our history is the same, our fate is the same, and our future is the same. Similar to how the Ottoman Balkans has risen to the centre of world politics in the 16th century, we will make Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre of world politics. This is the aim of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve this...not only for ourselves, but also for the whole humanity."[9] In the current Turkish foreign policy mind-set, "Ottomanism", if we may call it so, is generally understood as the epitome of liberalism, peace, tolerance and stability.

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[6] Sakin, Ubeydullah (2017). "Turkey's Soft Power Strategy: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina". Thesis. Istanbul Sehir University, Available at: http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/39710/000130188002.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[7] Yenigün, C. & Gjana, F. (2011). (eds), Balkans: Foreign Affairs, Politics and Socio-Cultures. Epoka University Press, Tirana.

[8] Raxhimi, Altin (21 April 2011). Davutoğlu : 'I'm Not a Neo-Ottoman'. Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence Alumni Initiative. Available at: http://fellowship.birn.eu.com/en/alumni-initiative/alumni-initiative-articles-davutoglu-i-m-not-a-neo-ottoman

[9] Ibid; Yenigün, C. & Gjana, F. (2011). (eds), Balkans: Foreign Affairs, Politics and Socio-Cultures. Epoka University Press, Tirana; Sakin, Ubeydullah (2017). "Turkey's Soft Power Strategy: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina". Thesis. Istanbul Sehir University Av.at: http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/39710/000130188002.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

In other words, Turkey seeks to establish legitimacy by projecting power, affection, credibility, and an active interest for the welfare of Muslim communities based on emotional and historical ties.

However, Turkey is hardly being driven by a mere romantic religiosity for the revival of "Pax-Ottomanica".[10] In reality, Turkey seeks to establish a "connection point with target states on which a realist/pragmatic relationship can be built".[11] In fact, according to Ibrahim Kalin, Turkey's "new foreign policy" is a mixture of "realpolitik and idealpolitik that is weaved around political and economic justice, principles of security and freedom, and trade and economic development".[12]

Nonetheless, religious invigoration through "Islamic piety" and "welfare politics" lay at the centre of Turkeys' soft power activism towards Muslim populations in the Balkans. For the Turkish government, Islam and Islamic communication are the major vehicles for increasing the Turkish influence. Until the coming of the AKP in power, religion has barely ever had such a prominent role in relations between Turkey and the Balkans. In contrast to preceding Turkish officials, during AKP's rule, visiting mosques, especially those restored with the support of Turkish funds, and praying with locals became a regular practice in official visits. Turkey's soft power in BiH relies heavily on its state-to public missions. TIKA has played an important role in the politics of building influence in BiH. TIKA has carried out the restoration of about 900 projects in 24 years, including the restoration of numerous Ottoman religious sites, such as the Ferhadiye mosque (Banja Luka,), Kursumlija Mosque (Maglaj), the Hünkar Mosque (Sarajevo), the Karadjoz-Beg Madrasa (Mostar), the Mevlevi Tekke (Sarajevo), and several other religious sites. TIKA

[10] Arin, Kubilay (2015). "Turkish Think Tanks, the AKP's Policy Network from neo-Gramscian and neo-Ottoman Angles". Occasional Paper Series, 4(1), Center for Turkish Studies Portland State University.
[11] Taspinar, Ömer (2008). "Turkey's Middle East Policies Between NeoOttomanism and Kemalism". Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Middle East Center, No.10.
[12] Kalın, Ibrahim (2011). "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey" Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs 16:5-23.

has also provided aid for the refurbishment of Ottoman cultural sites including the Fethi Gemuhluoğlu Library, the Mehmed Pasa Sokolovic Bridge (Visegrad), Bascarsija (Old Town Sarajevo), and the Kovaci Cemetery in Sarajevo, to name but a few.

These are all visible representations of the "glorious" Ottoman past of BiH. At the same time, TIKA finances the construction of welfare infrastructure, including health centres, education and agricultural projects across BiH.[13] At the same time, Diyanet (Turkey's Office for Religious Affairs) collaborates with Bosnia's Islamic Community and it has become a regular donor for Ramadan feasts in Bosnia, distributing Qurans to Bosnian Muslims. Diyanet, which is also involved in Islamic educational affairs abroad, has helped restore the Elci İbrahim Pasha's Madrasa in Travnik, which is one of the biggest Islamic schools in Bosnia. Turko-Islamic catechesis, bonding with official Turkish foreign policy aims, and reducing the appeal of contesting Saudi Wahhabi and Salafist doctrines are amongst Diyanet's most crucial objectives.

> **Through YEI, the Turkish government channels and supports cultural exchanges through planned programs that accustom local communities with Turkish culture, music, history and establishes local networks of certified Turkish language teachers.**

The Yunus Emre Institute is at the forefront of Turkey's soft power in BiH through cultural diplomacy. The Institute's active lobbying, by promoting the Turkish language and culture, succeeded the inclusion of the Turkish language as an optional course in elementary and secondary schools in many Balkan countries, including of course, Bosnia.[14] However, YEI does not simply teach the "Turkish Language to foreigners", but its activities directly target culture exportation and result in individuals to understand

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[13] TIKA Official Website. Av.at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/search?s=bosnia&page=1

[14] Çelik, Abdullah & Gorkem Dirik (14 June 2018). "Turkey projects soft power in the Balkans". Op-End. Daily Sabah. Av.at: https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2018/06/14/turkey-projects-soft-power-in-the-balkans

Turkey from the Turkish perspective. Through YEI, the Turkish government channels and supports cultural exchanges through planned programs that accustom local communities with Turkish culture, music, history and establishes local networks of certified Turkish language teachers. The Prime Ministry Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities or YTB, is equally active in the field of education and culture, granting scholarships to Bosnian students who wish to study in Turkish universities.

> **Turkish soft power is also reflected on the way in which Turkish companies appear in the eyes of the public. Turkish Airlines, for example, is the official sponsor of Sarajevo FK, one of the biggest two football clubs of BiH.**

Its scholarship program offers opportunities to Bosniak students to pursue academic degrees in Turkey, and "raises generations with a very good knowledge and experience of Turkey, enhancing thus the attractiveness of Turkish culture." On the other hand, the Turkish government has encouraged the establishment of Turkish private educational institutions in Bosnia. Ironically, two major institutions, the International University of Sarajevo and the International Burch University related to Fetullah Gülen's movement.[15] Turkish soft power is also reflected on the way in which Turkish companies appear in the eyes of the public.

Turkish Airlines, for example, is the official sponsor of Sarajevo FK, one of the biggest two football clubs of BiH and funds the nation's most prestigious international music and film festivals, such as the Sarajevo Film Festival and Sarajevo Jazz Festival.[16] Public-to-state organizations or civil associations

[15] 1Targański, Tomasz (2017). "Neo-Ottomanism. An empire being rebuilt?" New Eastern Europe, 3(4): The Balkan Carousel, 76-82. Av.at: http://neweasterneurope.eu/new_site/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NEE_3-4_2017_final.pdf

[16] Sakin, Ubeydullah (2017). "Turkey's Soft Power Strategy: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina". Thesis. Istanbul Sehir University Av.at: http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11498/39710/000130188002.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

have also played their part in promoting what is a formal policy agenda of cultural bonding by blending welfare and social development with private interests. For example, the Center for Developing Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiGMEV), a Bosnia-based Turkish business association, mediates between ministries, business chambers and companies of the two countries. In collaboration with the Federal State of BiH, the centre grants up to 60% assistance to Turkish businesses investing in BiH and organizes business trips to different locations in Bosnia, taking interested Turkish businessmen on-site to introduce investment opportunities. In fact, Bosnia has been going through a routine of post-conflict instability and inter-communal alienation. In some respects, such as the intensity of economic dependence and the level of interference, Turkey's soft power activism in BiH differs from Cyprus. Essentially, however, Turkey has been employing the same philosophy (i.e. a benign helper of its ethnic/religious kin) with a similar rhetoric (security-protectionism-humanitarianism) and with the use of the same state-to-public foreign policy tools.

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On the one hand, like Cyprus, Turkey's soft power capitalises on the insecurities felt by the Bosniaks, acting as the reliable and long-lasting partner who they can trust and rely on. But, on the other hand, taking into consideration the political linkages between Turkey and the Bosniaks, Turkey's actively projected soft power activism can only aggravate fears and suspicion among Bosnian Serbs in Republika of Srpska (and among the Croats of BiH). In a fragile state such as BiH, the side effects of Turkey's soft power

must be considered. If Bosnia represents a borderland, where Turkey seeks to counter-balance Euro-centric influences, Kosovo, and the Kosovo Albanian population (Kosovars) is akin more to Turkey's "step-child" in the region.

Erdoğan's blunt statement that "Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo" marks the particular importance Turkey places on Kosovo.[17] According to David Phillips, Director of the Columbia University Programme on Peace Building, "Turkey pursues a neo-Ottoman agenda in the Western Balkans. Over more than a decade, Turkey has systematically tried to make Kosovo a vassal state."[18]

Since the Yugoslav dissolution, Kosovo Albanians were viewed by Turkey exactly through the same light with their Bosniak counterparts. Unlike the Turkish Cypriots, who in formal discourse are treated as ethnic kin (Muslim Turks), Kosovars and Bosniaks, despite their linguistic and ethnic differentiations, are both viewed as a continuum of the Ottoman cosmopolitan legacy in the Balkans. To put it more succinctly, for the Islamist AKP, these two ethnic groups constitute Turkey's cultural bridgehead in Europe made up of its Muslim brethren (dindaslar) that were once loyal Ottoman subjects for centuries. Kosovo's idiosyncratic international status makes it practically a self-declared state, which nevertheless enjoys the recognition of many states on a

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bilateral basis. Although many states including major powers such the US, France, Germany, UK, Italy etc. have recognized Kosovo's declaratory independence in their state-to-state relations, other major powers including Russia and China have denied

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[17] World Bulletin (24 October 2013). "Erdogan: Turkey is Kosovo and Kosovo is Turkey" Av.at: https://www.worldbulletin.net/diplomacy/pm-erdogan-turkey-is-kosovo-and-kosovo-is-turkey-h121375.html
[18] David L. Phillips & Peci, Lulzim (2018). (eds), Threats and Challenges to Kosovo's Security. Columbia Press. Av.at: http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/ThreatsAndChallenges_Vers-FIN_(1)_94986.pdf

doing so. Five EU states have also denied granting Kosovo recognition. In reality, it all comes down to the on-going negotiation process between Kosovo and Serbia for reaching an agreement over Kosovo's internal structure (especially with regards to Northern Kosovo – Mitrovica region, which is controlled by Serbia). This process may ultimately pave the way for Kosovo's legal normalization and full entry into the international community. As things presently stand, Kosovo cannot yet become a member of the UN or progress way further with its EU integration. Uncertainty in Kosovo has given rise to a dynamic form of nationalism characterized by severe frustration with western policies and actors.

Despite the initial scepticism as to the impact of Kosovo's secession, mainly due to the parallels drawn with Turkey's internal Kurdish movement, Turkey has quickly grasped the opportunity for re-entering the Balkans, and thus turned into a steadfast proponent of Kosovo's self-determination, supported Kosovo's diplomatic efforts to sustain its economy and promote its independent status.

> **Turkey's soft power in Kosovo is again primarily projected through its normative tools: TIKA, Diyanet and the Yunus Emre Institute.**

Turkey's soft power is again primarily projected through its normative tools: TIKA, Diyanet and the Yunus Emre Institute. TIKA and the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) have put numerous religious buildings into service from the Ottoman era in Kosovo.[19] These include the restoration of Ottoman mosques and artefacts, such as the Fatih Sultan Mehmed Han Mosque (named after Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror), the Sinan Paşa Mosque (Ottoman governor of the region), the Yaşar Paşa Mosque (Ottoman Governor of Albanian origin), the Emin Paşa Mosque, the Bayrampaşa

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[19] Vračić, Alida (2016). "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans" Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik - German Institute for International and Security Affairs SWP Research Paper 11. Av at: https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf

and the Murat Bey Mosque (Carshia and Gazi Mehmet Pasha's Mosque are next in line).[20] However, Turkey's most ambitious project in Kosovo is the bid for the construction of Pristina's new mosque, which is proposed to resemble a copy of an Ottoman mosque. Upon approval by local authorities, its construction will be entirely paid and overseen by the Turkish state's Diyanet. However, there have been allegations that TIKA's role in Kosovo has gone far beyond financing projects concerning Kosovo's "shared Ottoman origins and fraternal closeness". Most evident of these allegations relate to the recruitment of local imam sympathisers appointed into mosques constructed or renovated with Turkish funds in order to promote the Turkish Sunni-Hanafi interpretation of Islam, not least as a counterweight to the dynamic Saudi-Wahhabi/Salafist and Iranian Shiite proselytization. Some local sources have linked TIKA and Diyanet with the outlawed NGO "Association for Culture and Education" (AKEA); an Islamic civic organization which maintained relations with the Turkish IHH (Turkish Islamic charity organization) and the Muslim Brotherhood and it was alleged to have worked together with the aforementioned Turkish agencies to provide funds for Islamist educational projects.[21] Official accusations came to the fore with the prohibition of AKEA in 2014, on grounds of its "unconstitutional activities, dissemination of an extremist ideology, call of hatred against other faiths, and the recruitment of Kosovo Albanian volunteers to join different terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq."[22]

Turkey has equally extended its influence in culture and education in Kosovo. Former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoǧlu was cited stating in 2014 "we are working in the whole Balkans, especially in Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania, to see a renewal of our culture."[23]

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[20] 6 TİKA's Mosque Restoration Projects, TIKA Official Website. Available at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/news/tikas_mosque_restoration_projects-8601

[21] Krasniqi, Kolë (2019). Islamist Extremism in Kosovo and the Countries of the Region (Springer):46-48.

[22] Ibid; Solberg, Anne Ross (2007). "The Role of Turkish Islamic Networks in the Western Balkans" Sudosteuropa, 55(4): 429-462.

[23] Chrzová, Barbora, Anja Grabovac, Martin Hála and Jan Lalić (2019). (Eds.). "Western Balkans at the Crossroads: Assessing Influences of Non-Western External Actors". The Prague Security Studies Institute. Av.at: https://www.balkancrossroads.com/bp-iv-culture-religion

The Yunus Emre Institute already operates three centres in Kosovo, in Pristina, Prizren and Pec, providing Turkish language courses, public talks with invited speakers from Turkey, Turkish music concerts, celebrating national commemorations and so on. Moreover, in the spirit of cultural cooperation, and in an effort to foster a positive conceptual reimagining of Ottoman rule among Kosovars, Kosovo reedited its school history textbooks. For example, "the Ministry of Education in Kosovo, at a request by Turkish state authorities, "reedited" history textbooks, carrying out corrections so that mentions of violence or cruelty at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in the Albanian inhabited areas were omitted"[24].

The words "violence" and "killing" in relation to the Ottoman Empire were erased and replaced with the words "rule" and "detention" and in parts relating to the appropriation of Albanian estates and wealth, the words "revenge" and "killing" were replaced with "taking of estates" and "introduction of taxes" as well as "deportation of a part of the local population.[25] For reasons of allurement, Turkey could no longer been seen through the light of conquest and oppression related to its past Ottoman rule.

> **"The Ministry of Education in Kosovo, at a request by Turkish state authorities, "reedited" history textbooks, carrying out corrections so that mentions of violence or cruelty at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in the Albanian inhabited areas were omitted."**

Turkey has been active through its national scholarships programme in attracting Kosovar students whereas TIKA has sponsored schools in Pristina, Prizren, Gjakova, and Peja through donations and refurbishments (Prizren University), catering also for

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[24] Ibid
[25] Ibid

Kosovo's Turkish minority (of about 20.000). Indeed, some schools provide Qur'anic instruction, as well as Turkish language instruction.

However, Turkey's entry into the educational sector seems to have been initially supported by the Gülenist movement, when it was still aligned with AKP's government.[26] Today, the Gülenist educational holdings in Kosovo have become extremely troublesome for Turkey's state-controlled narrative. Institutions related to the so-called Gülen community ("Gullistan Education") include the Mehmet Akif school chain (4 primary and secondary schools, 1.700 students), the International School of Pristina (primary / secondary) and the Mehmet Akif College (Prizren), among others. This has led to several requests by Turkey for closing down all Gülenist educational premises in Kosovo. In an effort to counter Gülenist influence, the Turkish government has sponsored the opening of madrassa-like Mariff schools funded by Erdoğan's son Bilal. Two of them are already in operation in Kosovo.[27] Nevertheless, despite the rift with AKP's pressing requests, relations of the Gülenist community with much of Kosovo's political and bureaucratic elite have remained cordial, raising serious concerns in Turkey.[28] In turn, Kosovo's hesitations for handing over a number of suspected Turkish citizens accused by Turkey for subversive activity, has led to abduction of five Turkish employees of Mehmet Akif schools in Kosovo and their deportation to Turkey with the cooperation of the Kosovo Intelligence Agency. On the one hand, "the imminent danger is that the most vital institutions of Kosovo's security, the intelligence and the Ministry of Interior Affairs, have been compromised and are under the direct influence of the Turkish

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[26] Mehmeti, Jeton (2012). "The Economic and Social Investment of Turkey in Kosovo / Turkey's Economic and Social Contribution in Kosovo" Adam Akademi, 1: 97-106 http://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/230539

[27] David L. Phillips & Peci, Lulzim (2018). (eds), Threats and Challenges to Kosovo's Security. Columbia Press. Av.at: http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/ThreatsAndChallenges_Vers-FIN_(1)_94986.pdf

[28] Shtavica, Muharem (2018). The Construction of FETÖ in Kosovo. Marmara University Istanbul. Av.at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331154717_THE_CONSTRUCTION_OF_FETO_IN_KOSOVO_THE_CONSTRUCTION_OF_FETO_IN_KOSOVO

government."[29] At a closer look, criticism over this scandalous event has practically revealed a rift in Kosovo's civic society and within the country's political ranks over the actual extent of Turkey's interference and power-projections.[30]

Turkey's development and investment activity is particularly used for exhibiting its economic prowess in Kosovo and increasing its visibility. TIKA directs approximately 18.5% of its total budget into the Balkans, mostly in humanitarian projects (food and medical equipment distribution) and through the reconstruction projects in culture and education. However, Turkey has acquired a much more dynamic influence in the economy sector, demonstrating its capacity in the eyes of the people and deepening its partnerships with Kosovo's' governing elites. Kosovo's banking sector is dominated by Turkish-owned banks (Banka Kombëtare Tregtare, Turkiye Is Bank, Turkish Economic Bank, and Zirrat Bank). The Pristina International Airport has been built and managed by the Turkish Limak Holding and the Çalık-Limak Consortium has acquired the Kosovo Energy Distribution Services.[31] The construction of the Pristina-Hani Elezit highway between Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia has been granted to the Turkish-French Enka-Bechtel consortium. Çalik and Limak are politically well connected with the AKP and Erdoğan's son-in-law was the chief executive officer of Çalık Holdings.[32] From 2004 to 2014, investments amounted to 360 million euros – 12% of total foreign investments Kosovo have attracted the highest level of FDI from Turkey over the last five

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[29] David L. Phillips & Peci, Lulzim (2018). (eds), Threats and Challenges to Kosovo's Security. Columbia Press. Av.at: http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/ThreatsAndChallenges_Vers-FIN_(1)_94986.pdf

[30] After the extradition, Kosovo's PM Haradinaj fired the country's head of intelligence and the Minister of Interior, raising criticism by Erdoğan and accusations for protecting terrorists. Xhambazi, Visar (10 May 2018). "Erdogan views Kosovo as a neo-Ottoman Vassal State". Commentary. New Eastern Europe. Av.at: https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/05/10/erdogan-views-kosovo-neo-ottoman-vassal-state/

[31] Kütük, Dilek. (5 November 2015). "Deepening relations between the Balkans and Turkey: Economic growth and patterns of development". Journal of Turkish Weekly. Av. at: https://foreignpolicynews.org/2015/05/11/deepening-relations-between-the-balkans-and-turkey-economic-growth-and-patterns-of-development/

[32] Shaw, Craig & Zeynep Şentek (May 19 2017). "Turkish President Erdoğan's son-in-law in off-shore tax scheme". The Black Sea. Av.at: https://theblacksea.eu/stories/malta-files/turkish-president-erdogans-son-in-law-in-off-shore-tax-scheme/

years. Only in 2015 did Kosovo attract 316.3 million euros in FDI.[33] More than 900 Turkish companies operate in Kosovo. About 7.000 Kosovars are employed by Turkish companies in, for example, the food processing and textile sectors.[34] The media and entertainment commodities are of particular interest to Turkey's image-making attempts in the Balkans as a whole. This forms the backbone of Turkey's day-to-day communication with local audiences.

TRT and the Anadolu Agency transmit radio programmes in the Albanian and Bosnian (Serb-Croatian) language.

TRT and the Anadolu Agency transmit radio programmes in the Albanian and Bosnian (Serb-Croatian) language. Naturally, Turkish politics and society are set in the agenda. Particular emphasis is put on president Erdoğan's hegemonic image and the AKP government's achievements within Turkey and abroad. More importantly, numerous Turkish serials are watched by young and older generations in Kosovo, Bosnia and the Balkans at large. Turkish soap operas and "historical films" are forms of cultural interaction between Turkey and the Balkans. [35] Turkish serials usually display sentimentalism, Turkish family norms and social ethics, which are not particularly alien to many in Balkan societies.[36] These are often sparkled with a glamorous urban lifestyle, family drama, bits of action and intrigue. Historical series display Ottoman grandeur, romantic nostalgia, charisma, understandings of justice, and of course, heroism.[37] The aim is to construct and export a more positive and humane image of Turkey's society,

[33] Vračić, Alida (2016). "Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans" Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik - German Institute for International and Security Affairs SWP Research Paper 11. Av at: https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2016RP11_vcc.pdf

[34] David L. Phillips & Peci, Lulzim (2018). (eds), Threats and Challenges to Kosovo's Security. Columbia Press. Av.at: http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/ThreatsAndChallenges_Vers-FIN_(1)_94986.pdf

[35] Kütük, Dilek. (5 November 2015). "Deepening relations between the Balkans and Turkey: Economic growth and patterns of development". Journal of Turkish Weekly. Av. at: https://foreignpolicynews.org/2015/05/11/deepening-relations-between-the-balkans-and-turkey-economic-growth-and-patterns-of-development/

[36] Yenigün, C. & Gjana, F. (2011). (eds), Balkans: Foreign Affairs, Politics and Socio-Cultures. Epoka University Press, Tirana.

[37] Bechev, Dimitar (2012). "Turkey in the Balkans: Taking a Broader View". Insight Turkey, 14 (1):131-146.

values, history, and culture. No matter the low aesthetic value, poor scenarios, and overall banality of Turkish soap operas, the connection with local audiences is primarily sought through their earthliness and simplicity.

III. An Overall Assessment of Turkey's Soft Power.

Admittedly, the exercise of "power" is not simply confined to the strict limits and intensity of crude enforcement. Evidently, power contains the element of the power-holder's own capacity to influence another actor's values and interests and bring a target audience closer to the views and objectives of the powerholder. Attraction and persuasion are, according to Nye, key elements in the exercise of soft power-projection. However, Nye prescribed a somewhat firm distinction between coercive, economic and soft power practices, disassociating soft power from its often coercive or economic underpinnings. Developed during a more optimistic era, Nye's axiomatic distinction is heavily at odds with the realities of contemporary strategic policymaking employed by Turkey in the emerging global multi-polarity, and thus it appears problematic. The analysis demonstrated that, although theoretically soft power draws on the actor's persuasive narrative and attractiveness, sincerity and consistency with political values, and with a foreign policy that is perceived as moral and legitimate, it does not however presuppose a state's genuinely moral motivation, and it does not presume the purely voluntary, independent and co-opting nature of relations.

The analysis exemplified the standard mechanisms through which Turkey's state apparatus operates in the conduct of its soft power policies. Turkey's soft power framework is made up of a unified grand-narrative and a standard operational modus operandi without major conditional or operational deviations. Its penetrative extent is generally determined by state-to-state dependencies and the target community's

degree of permissiveness. Turkey's soft power projection in Cyprus's occupied areas, Kosovo and BiH is driven by a multidimensional policy of power-projection through the mobilization of a variety of mostly state-to-public (TIKA, Yunus Emre, Diyanet, Mariff Foundations, and government affiliated private agents). It is therefore a largely top-down, centrally directed and continuously supervised process. Turkey's cultural, economic and humanitarian involvement in occupied Cyprus intertwines with the use of subtle coercion.

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Soft power is exercised in smarter, manipulative and combinative ways alongside with coercion in order to support Turkey's cultural, historical and religious narrative and spill over into the social and economic spheres more effectively. Most certainly, in all cases examined, local insecurities and economic weaknesses help Turkey to increase its soft power leverage in the localities. The analysis confirms that Turkey makes coordinated use of its state-to-public agents and resources through "daily communication" (maintains visible contact), "strategic communication" (demonstrates political and diplomatic support) and building lasting relations (projecting social care and credibility) with local communities and political representatives.

Attractiveness of the "Turkish Grand-narrative"

The intellectual spearhead of Turkey's soft power lies on the premises of its "Ottoman historical legacy" encompassing religion, cultural ties, and ethnic affiliations with local populations in Cyprus, Kosovo and BiH with a twist of modern Turkey's democratic

experience. Turkey is therefore presented as the surviving vehicle and legitimate inheritor of a bygone, fair, benevolent, tolerant and affluent Ottoman era. Turkish soft power uses the Ottoman grand-narrative of shared history and culture to moralize and justify actions by adopting a vague sense of responsibility and kinship with the Turkish and Muslim congenial populations in Cyprus and the Balkans. This kind of narrative, when accompanied by acts of generosity and social care, does indeed have some considerable success within the target communities. Yet Turkish soft power does not entirely rest on the safety of its "message value" alone. Allurement and persuasion do not passively rely on the attractiveness and persuasiveness of its ideals and values. Turkeys' synergies with willing or dependable local elites allow for a constant show-off that indeed creates a sense of fear and awe through capacity gilded with an exhilarating historical and cultural narrative that provides Turkey with a moral sense and justification.

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However, the misleading early-2000s perception that Turkey could swiftly become a blueprint for modern Islamic-democracies, by adhering to the liberal EU principles and democratic norms while nurturing Islamic tradition, has certainly facilitated Turkey's early soft power performance and appeased its opponents. Nonetheless, Turkey's intimidating prestige and paternalism have allowed cultural assets to be manipulated in ways that interfere with local norms, especially in the occupied areas of Cyprus. The Turkish narrative derives from its potency through intimidation and through the dynamic exploitation of the receptor community's insecurities. Carefully processed cultural and religious initiatives, such as the construction of Ottoman-style mosques and Islamic

madrasas, Mariff schools and theological faculties, are self-initiated projects under the guise of democratic freedom and cultural protectionism, symbolizing the care and responsibility shown by Turkey with the complicity of the dependant local governments. This is evident in all three cases.

Sincerity and Consistency of Political Values

The "sincerity and consistency of political values" is judged neither by an actor's insistence in the quality and depth of its values, nor by the truthful and sincere application of those within and outside its domain. Turkey's exporting of "political values" is often at odds with local cultural norms in the Cyprus occupied areas, and to some extent in Kosovo and BiH. Turkey has indeed developed a pseudo-liberal rhetoric, in the same way it has been used in the early years of the AKP's governance (human rights, tolerance, democratization etc.). A short flashback indicates that AKP's liberal and benign foreign policy rhetoric was limited to the service of narrow strategic interests albeit done in a more marketable, and

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"politically correct" fashion. It soon later diminished when it reached its utility limitations. The straining control of Turkey over the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus and Ankara's strong economic and diplomatic ties with Kosovo and BiH have allowed Turkey to export its political, religious, and social values, often via synergies with local beneficiaries who indeed see Turkey as a gallant and capable regional counterweight.

However, if we are to assume that "leading by example" is an important part of an actor's credibility, then, the AKP's soft power rhetoric on "democracy", "stability", "peace and tolerance" controverts with AKP's authoritarian rule. Hence, the AKP's autocratic rule and

Turkeys' distancing from fundamental EU principles and norms controverts with Ankara's stated desire for "democracy, European integration and tolerance" in Cyprus and the Balkans. It is questionable whether Turkey's lurch towards authoritarianism may eventually reduce its standing and attractiveness in major parts of the Turkish Cypriot (both natives and settlers), Kosovar and Bosnian Muslim society. Political values (such as democracy, tolerance, multi-nationalism, and rights.), no matter how sincerely reproduced abroad, are inevitably exported with an inherent lack of sincerity and consistency. Yet despite its slide to autocracy and "de-Europeanization", Turkey has portrayed an interest in the EU membership of Balkan states.

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Notably, however, Kosovo is only considered by the EU as a potential candidate given its non-recognition issues and the pending talks with Serbia whereas BiH membership progress is particularly sluggish. However, Turkey exercises significant influence within the Turkish, Albanian and Bosniak political communities in the Balkans, as it similarly does in Cyprus. If the accession of the aforementioned states is ultimately successful (in the case of occupied Cyprus, the enacting of the EU aquis communitaire via settlement), it is highly possible that these communities or the Turkish Cypriot community would not restrict their close relations with Turkey.

Turkey could thus exert indirect influence into the EU.[38] On the other hand, "if the disillusionment in Balkan societies, [and in Cyprus], continues and the process of integration into the EU is not as smooth as they expect, Kosovo, BiH and [occupied part]

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[38] Bugajski, Janusz (11 April 2018). "Is Turkey destabilizing the Balkans?" Commentary. Center for European Policy Analysis. Av.at: https://www.cepa.org/turkey-balkans

Cyprus may find it reasonable to turn away from the EU and towards Turkey."[39] Turkey opens up the possibility for Albanian and Bosniak nationalists to respond to disappointing delays and a loss of vision by leaning towards Turkey for an alternative path.

The projection of humanitarian ideals, common political values and historical ties form Turkey's ideological axis for the achievement of realpolitik objectives, including the deepening of Turkey's regional dependencies and sphere of influence in areas important to its strategic depth. Aware of the regional ethno-religious divisions, Ankara acts as a "benevolent counterweight" in the regional balance of power, capitalizing on the local insecurities and economic weakness of Muslim/Turkish populations in fragile states (BiH, Kosovo, Cyprus) while

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trying to pacify relations with older opponents (e.g. Serbia, Bulgaria). Turkish ideas of responsibility care and protection of religious and ethnic kin communities allows Turkey to co-formulate its regional surroundings and obtain an increasingly important role and voice in developments affecting the stability of the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean region.

However, Ankara's heavy-handed and paternalistic approach contributes to intensifying suspicions, and it clearly discourages efforts to resolve the Cyprus Question. In fact, both communities in Cyprus are practically faced with an upsetting dilemma, having to choose between the present illegitimacy of Turkey's domination, confined in the northern part of the island, or comply with a degree of Turkish influence and interference through the

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[39] Palickova, Agata (24 June 2019). "Turkey, Russia and China covet Western Balkans as EU puts enlargement on hold" Euractiv. Av. at: https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/turkey-russia-and-china-covet-western-balkans-as-eu-puts-enlargement-on-hold/

legal sanctioning of a Turkish Cypriot constituent state within a federation. Be it as it may, crude interferences in the democratic decision-making processes of the Turkish Cypriot community in "TRNC" and frequent coercion contradicts the AKP's soft power image and rhetoric. Audacious interferences in independent Kosovo's security system also indicate Turkey's inconsistency with the political values promoted while the suspicions raising role of Turkey in BiH, problematizes Bosnian Serbs causing thus further frustration.

More recently, the Coronavirus Pandemic exposed a symbolic, albeit indicative projection of how Turkey utilises human-centric practices and solidarity ideals for power projection in the occupied areas of Cyprus. As soon as the epidemic hit the occupied areas, and considering the poor state of the "TRNC" health system, Turkey rushed in to provide medical supplies and advice against the virus.[40] However, the economic recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the occupied areas has played well at the hands of Turkey's support to the Turkish Cypriot community. Turkey is reluctant on releasing the much needed regular funds to the Turkish Cypriot administration on the grounds that the Turkish Cypriot administration has been particularly sluggish with economic reforms, the extradition of individuals related to designated "terrorist organizations" (FETO etc) and above all due to continuous political frictions between Turkish Cypriot President Mustafa Akinci and Ankara. Turkey's vindictive stance aimed to affect the "Presidential elections" of October 2020 in the occupied areas of Cyprus, and help ousting Mustafa Akinci from the so-called "Presidential Office". Nonetheless, due to the urgency of the coronavirus outbreak, and with the mediation of Prime Minister Ersin Tatar, Ankara's favoured candidate for the presidential elections, Turkey

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[40] Bilge, Ömer (23 April 2020). "Turkish Cyprus largely slows spread of virus". Hurriyet Daily News
https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-cyprus-largely-slows-spread-of-virus-154128

ultimately released an instalment of 72 million TRY (approx. 10 million euros) as emergency financial assistance to the "TRNC".[41]

Quite contrary to how Turkey uses it soft power with its weakest receptor communities, humanitarian-centric soft power initiatives, are used by Turkey as a "plead" to key states for assistance and external support to Turkey's deepening economic challenges. Faced with drastic currency devaluations, mounting inflation, large external and internal debts, a lack of currency exchange deposits, and growing unemployment, Turkey is edging on a fiscal collapse unless it ensures a large fiscal rescue package by international borrowing. Pressurised by economic problems and hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic, Turkey has nevertheless engaged in a "public marketing campaign" delivering medical equipment cargos to the Balkans and Caucasus states, to selected European countries (Italy, Spain, UK), and to the US.

However, perhaps there might be an explanation to this peculiar humanitarian gesture towards the West's more developed economies. Eager to avoid IMF rescue loans, unable to extract large funds from its lending partners (e.g Qatar) and hard-pressed by US threats on sanctions, Turkey turns back to the traditional and more reliable western capital market economies. Countries that control much of the international financial flows, possess significant service sectors, and hold significant industrial and investment potential, prime among which is the United States. Interestingly, in an act of appeasement to the US, Turkish officials announced that due to the pandemic Turkey has postponed the activation of the highly contentious Russian-made S-400 missile batteries.

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[41] Usul, Ahmet Sertan (21 March 2020). "Turkey provides $11M aid for Northern Cyprus to combat virus". Anadolu Agency. Av.at: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-provides-11m-aid-for-northern-cyprus-to-combat-virus/1774261

On the political level, disillusioned with Russia's role in Syria and Libya, humanitarian donations are used as pretext for repairing damaged ties with the United States, and easing up relations with EU member states. On the occasion of the Turkish medical cargo (sent by one military cargo aircraft), President Erdoğan drafted an accompanying letter to US President Donald Trump in which, if carefully understood, Turkey pleads for the need to re-evaluate US-Turkish relations. In his words, "Recent developments in our region, particularly in Syria and Libya, have once again demonstrated the importance of upholding the Turkish-U.S. alliance and cooperation at full strength. I hope that in the upcoming period, with the spirit of solidarity we have displayed during the pandemic, Congress and the U.S. media will better understand the strategic importance of our relations and act in a way that our common fight against our common problems necessitates."[42]

Morality and Legitimacy in Foreign Policy

> **Geopolitical realities pose pragmatic limitations to Turkish soft power in the Balkans and require a fine balancing between rhetoric and actions in order to avoid upsetting important regional players.**

The "morality and legitimacy" of Turkey's foreign policy objectives in the eyes of its target audiences is practically linked to power, pragmatic terms and constrains. Although Turkey's morality and legitimacy in foreign policy are not always endorsed by receptor communities, succumbing to Turkey's "morality and legitimacy claims" is the ensuing result of necessity and consensus on mutually perceived interests. If both concepts are normatively understood, it is neither the morality nor the legitimacy of a strategic actor's foreign policy that prompts the receptor community to endorse the

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[42] "Erdoğan assures Trump Turkey will show all kinds of solidarity as reliable, strong ally" (29 April 2020). Hurriyet Daily News. Av.at: https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-assures-trump-turkey-will-show-all-kinds-of-solidarity-as-reliable-strong-ally-154287

righteousness of its foreign policy objectives. In essence, the priority interests of the soft power receptor community determine the utility of a power-holder's significance in relation to the broader strategic interests and fears and therefore define the morality and legitimacy of its policies. We should not ignore the fact that soft power includes a proportionate exchange of diplomatic, economic and political assets, with all sides acknowledging a degree of serviceability towards each other according to their analogy of power, capacity, needs and perceived interests.

Morality and legitimacy in foreign policy are therefore understood and justified by the receptor state's political elite, judged through the lens of utility and not by ethical standards. Nonetheless, geopolitical realities pose pragmatic limitations to Turkish soft power in the Balkans and require a fine balancing between rhetoric and actions in order to avoid upsetting important regional players. A major problem with Turkish policy limitations relates to Russia and China's non-recognition of Kosovo (on a unilateral basis). The same holds for Turkish involvement in BiH, which is again limited by the necessity to hold the Bosnian state together, and more precisely the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the only country Bosniaks can call home). Russia's influence and backing to Serbia and the Bosnia Serbs is also a major limitation against turning Turkey's soft power into a real political gain at the expense of other communities. Indicatively, Turkey attempted to legitimize its policy in the Balkans by smoothening up relations with Belgrade, aware of the fact that Russia could only recognize Kosovo after an agreed settlement with Serbia and second, that Serbia holds a key role in preserving the Bosnian state's integrity intact.

At the same time, Serbia wants to keep Turkey appeased for internal purposes. Turkey claims significant influence over Serbia's Sandzak Muslims (Muslim-majority region along the Serbia-Montenegro border). In fact, Sandzak Muslim loyalty toward Turkey stems from close historical and cultural ties, and Ankara is viewed as a potential source

of protection from Serbian nationalism.[43] Despite Turkey's all-embracing soft and hard power policies in Cyprus, the US, EU and Russia's legally correct stance towards the Republic of Cyprus, has so far practically discouraged Turkey from effectively pursuing the recognition of Turkish Cypriot statehood (Kosovization) outside an agreed settlement with the Greek Cypriots, or annexing it Crimea-style without avoiding another serious breach of international law. However, for purely strategic interests, Turkey has effectively forced upon the Turkish Cypriot society an aggressive social "harmonization and acquiescence process", albeit with serious local reactions that have already created an irreversible political, ethno-demographic and cultural distortion, undermining the possibilities of a viable and meaningful settlement.

There is a widespread perception that the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean are becoming an arena of geopolitical competition. Due to their deep-cutting insecurities, nations in these regions are particularly conducive to aggressive politics and alliance building, open to protectionism and often willingly subduing to external paternalism in response to threats. Understandably, for as long there was some sort of compatibility of aims between Turkey and its western allies, there has been little concern of Turkey's regional influence. However, since AKP's rise, this certainty is obviously questioned.

> **Ankara might be tempted to enhance its own independent role in the Balkans and Cyprus by using its influence as a bargaining chip for returns while increasing its ability to stabilize or destabilize the region.**

Considering pragmatic limitations, the impact of Turkeys' soft power policies on regional stability will depend on Turkey's endurance and capacity to continue with its soft power

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[43] Bugajski, Janusz (11 April 2018). "Is Turkey destabilizing the Balkans?" Commentary. Center for European Policy Analysis. Av.at: https://www.cepa.org/turkey-balkans

initiatives, the degree of Turkey's autonomy and "emancipation" from the western security system, and the existence of strong regional counterweights that may contain it. Ankara might be therefore tempted to enhance its own independent role in the Balkans and Cyprus by using its influence as a bargaining chip for returns while increasing its ability to stabilize or destabilize the region.[44] However, Turkey's sense of autonomy in foreign policy, a trust deficit in relations between Ankara and the U.S (Congress), which is mainly the result of Turkish-Russian relations, and troubled relations with European and regional countries, have introduced new concerns about Turkey's role in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean regions.

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[44] David L. Phillips & Peci, Lulzim (2018). (eds), Threats and Challenges to Kosovo's Security. Columbia Press. Av.at: http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/ThreatsAndChallenges_Vers-FIN_(1)_94986.pdf