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TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS MACEDONIA AFTER THE COLD WAR

ABSTRACT

The provided paper describes main features of the Turkish foreign policy towards Macedonia after the Cold War. The strategic character of the bilateral Turkish-Macedonian partnership has been underlined. This partnership has its roots in the pragmatic tendency of the Turkish foreign policy to strengthen its influence and provide stability in the Balkan Peninsula. It is also a part of the broader context of the Turkey's foreign policy which is determined by global factors and centuries-lasting history of bilateral relations. A particular dynamism of the Turkey's foreign policy under Justice and Development Party's rule has been underlined in this paper. It has been clarified that implementation of the "strategic depth" conception – that forms a normative base for Turkey's foreign activities under prime minister R.T. Erdoğan's rule – has largely contributed to the deepening of bilateral relations.

Key-words: Turkey, Macedonia, foreign policy, partnership, strategic depth

The disintegration of the Eastern Bloc has significantly changed the actual international relations as it made an impact not only on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but to large extent on the countries of the Balkan Peninsula as well. Such circumstances like the constitution of various new states, political transformation in already existing states or the revival of old conflicts and emerging new ones became altogether a great challenge for the Republic of Turkey that was forced to redefine its role in international relations and the type of foreign policy against neighbouring regions. As the Soviet Union dissolved, the largest threat for Turkish security vanished, however, on the other hand, constitution of various new states in Balkans and Caucasus

that might have been a source of potential conflict, concerned Ankara. In this context it should be underlined that the end of the Cold War for Turkey meant not only the necessity to develop new boundaries for foreign policy, but also to change its position in structure of the West, especially in NATO, and to self-define against its neighbouring regions, including the Balkan Peninsula.¹

In the context of Turkey activity within NATO structures Western countries opinions that Turkey geostrategic importance decreased after the dissolution of Soviet Union rapidly became incorrect. Such events like the Gulf War or eruption of the conflict in the Balkans proved that Turkey was still an important NATO member.

On the other hand, lack of Soviet threat provided Turkey with greater possibility to show its activity in neighbouring regions than in the past, including the Balkan Peninsula, whose political and economical stability is a key factor for Turkish vital interests. That meant that as the Cold War came to an end, new Turkish foreign policy in this region of the world focused on creation of general atmosphere of security and stability, while making bonds within political, economical or military co-operation.² Summing up, we can mention the following factors that determine the character of Turkish foreign policy towards Macedonia. Especially, the above-mentioned stability is a key factor for the security of Turkey. The fact that the Balkans are the transit route to the Western Europe for Turkey is also of great importance; Turkish trade, industry and tourism greatly depend on regional stability. The third factor is mutual history and the so-called Ottoman heritage that Turkey is currently trying to make use of, underlining its positive elements and being not able to avoid accusations of building new Ottoman net of influence in the Balkans; this problem also matters in the Turkish-Macedonian relations. The next factor determining Turkish activity in the whole Balkan region is the status of ethnic minorities, especially Turkish and Muslim minority inhabiting such countries like Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Greece or Serbia.³ This specific inheritance from the Ottoman Empire constitutes a threat for Turkey as in case of a conflict or a war Muslims and Turkish people seek asylum in Turkey, thus generating enormous economic and social costs. As the result within its foreign policy, Turkey consequently articulates the issue of protection of human rights and ethnic minorities living in certain countries and in case of conflicts it vows to perform actions on the international level and these rules apply to Turkish minority in Macedonia as well. It should be also mentioned that Turkish elites consequently underline that Turkish minority should constitute an integral part of given political community and act within accepted legal and political system; such an attitude means that Turkish authorities in Ankara do not

¹ M. Özcan, 'An Overview of Turkey's Policy in the Balkans and Middle East in the 1990's', *Turkish Review of the Balkan Studies*, No. 8 (2003), p. 19.

² G. Öztekin, 'Situation in the Balkans and Turkey's Balkan Policy', *Turkish Review of the Balkan Studies*, No. 8 (2003), p. 12.

³ According to the last census performed in Macedonia in 2002, 77.959 citizens – less than 4% of total population of Macedonia – declared they were Turkish. See: 'Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002', Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, at <<http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>>, 21 August 2013.

support any revisionist or secession efforts at all, and parties that represent such values, e.g. in Bulgaria or Macedonia, are treated as an element of representation of given ethnic group and not as a threat for integrity of a given country. That means that Turkey supported constitution of political parties representing it, treating them as subsequent groups and the political instrument of integration and stabilization and at the same time willing to rebuild bonds with Turkish minority.⁴

All of the above-mentioned factors had significant influence on the intensity of Turkish activity in the Balkans after the end of the Cold War. Analyzing actual Turkish-Macedonian relations that have been peaceful since their origins, it should be firstly underlined that these relations are the part of a wider context of Turkish foreign policy as a whole. The fact that Turkey has been supporting authorities in Skopje since the establishment of the young Macedonian state, successfully helping – we will describe it later – to overcome political crises in 1991-1992, 1999 and 2001, and that it is still a strategic partner for this country is based on three factors defining Turkish foreign policy against the Balkans as a whole. We should especially pay attention to the character of Turkish-American relations that took a new shape after the end of the Cold War. As the USA decided to take a crucial role in the Balkans, willing to act against, among others, Russian influence in this area, Turkey, being a close ally and having historical and religious connections with the region, became an even more attractive partner for the USA. On the other hand, many Balkan states treated Turkey – and still do – as an intermediary in their relations with the USA, while accepting Turkish-American co-operation in the region.⁵

The next element determining engagement and consequent building of good relations with Macedonia is characteristics of internal political processes in Turkey. As we will show it, activity and support for this country are also based on the fact that in Turkey itself there are lobbying groups that during crisis situation force unhesitating actions of political elites, i.e. mainly political parties that are currently in the government. Existence of such groups should be linked with the fact that currently ca. 20% of inhabitants of Turkey have Balkan origins.⁶ The result is that the fate of the country their ancestors have come from matters to citizens of Turkey.

It is also worth noticing that extraordinarily friendly Turkish-Macedonian relations are linked with traditional Turkish-Greek rivalry. As the Cold War came to an end, tense relations between Ankara and Athens did not generally change, and the Balkans became the theatre of rivalry between both countries. Greece rapidly started to gain

⁴ M. Türkeş, 'Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Balkans: Quest for Enduring Stability and Security' in İ. Bal (ed.), *Turkish Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War Era*, Boca Raton 2004, p. 200.

⁵ İ. Uzgel, 'Doksanlarda Türkiye için Bir İşbirliği ve Rekabet Alanı Olarak Balkanlar' in G. Özcan, Ş. Kut (eds.), *En uzun on yıl. Türkiye'nin ulusal güvenlik ve dış politika gündeminde doksanlı yıllar*, İstanbul 2000, p. 407 (*Büke Yayınları. Araştırma Dizisi*, 2000/2).

⁶ The reason of this situation has historical origins, such as the long-lasting presence of the Ottoman Empire at the Balkan Peninsula and the large migration of refugees into its territory that started in late 19th century. It is estimated that 6 million of Turkish people come from Macedonia. The largest groups of immigrants took place after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and in the 1950s.

a lead, when it comes to influence on the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, as this country dominated Turkey economically and belonged to the EU. Moreover, the dissolution of Yugoslavia led to the situation in which Turkey had to rapidly become more active in foreign affairs and start to tighten bonds with such countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia or Macedonia, as if Turkey did not engage in this matter, Greece would have reached a dominant position in the Balkan Peninsula.⁷

All of the above-mentioned factors have contributed to the strategic character of Turkish-Macedonian relations since their very beginning. It was expressed in active diplomatic support provided in the early 1990s, when the Macedonian state was created and consolidated. Turkey was the second Balkan state – after Bulgaria – that recognized Macedonia in February 1992 under its name specified in the Macedonia constitution, i.e. “Republic of Macedonia”.⁸ On May 18, 1992 Turkey and Macedonia signed the so-called Security Protocol that obliged Turkey to provide material support to Macedonia and established military co-operation.⁹ We dare to say that diplomatic and material support in that period was a key factor for the endurance of the young country that had to face not only serious internal problems, but also the enmity of its neighbours, mainly from Greece. At the same time Turkey consequently intensified co-operation with the government in Skopje. In July 1995 both countries signed the Agreement on Military Co-operation and Training and the Agreement on Co-operation, Amity and Friendly Neighbouring Relations, and the latter was the thirtieth agreement signed between them.¹⁰ The same year Turkish support once again turned to be a key factor against the trade blockade performed by Greece, when fuel supplies from Turkey via Bulgaria to Macedonia managed to lessen the range of the crisis and saved Macedonian economy from total collapse.

The next opportunity to try the quality of Turkish-Macedonian relations were events that took place in March 1999, when NATO intervened in Yugoslavia. The government in Skopje feared enhanced tension in Macedonia and disruption of fragile stabilization between Albanians and Macedonians in the country. Since the very beginning of these events Turkey has been intensely participating in actions aiming to solve the problem as a NATO member. Within support for Macedonia in this period Turkey

⁷ M. Türkeş, ‘Türkiye Avrupa İlişkilerinde Balkanlar Faktörü ve Yeni Eğilimler’ in A. Eralp (ed.), *Türkiye ve Avrupa. Batılılaşma, kalkınma, demokrasi*, Ankara 2002, p. 337.

⁸ The term “Republic of Macedonia” is consequently not recognized by Greece that declares that the term “Macedonia” is restricted to one of the regions of Greece. Moreover, Greece fears possible territorial claims from Macedonia. In 1993, considering incorporation of Macedonia to the UN, the authorities in Skopje agreed to be recognized by this organization as Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Turkey consequently uses the term “Republic of Macedonia”, even in international relations.

⁹ İ. Uzel, ‘Balkanlarla İlişkiler’ in B. Oran (ed.), *Türk dış politikası. Kurtuluş Savaşından bugüne olgular, belgeler, yorumlar*, Vol. 2: 1980-2001, İstanbul 2002, p. 515 (*Araştırma-Inceleme Dizisi – İletişim Yayınları*, 119).

¹⁰ Ş. Kut, ‘Türkiye’nin Balkanlar Politikası’ in A. Makovsky, S. Sayarı (eds.), *Türkiye’nin yeni dünyası. Türk dış politikasının değişen dinamikleri*, İstanbul 2002, p. 117 (*Alfa Yayınları*, 1032. Dizi, 39).

hosted part of refugees and provided help in the form of food supplies for Albanians migrating from Kosovo to Macedonia.¹¹ It is estimated that Turkey hosted then in total ca. 20,000 refugees from Macedonia and Albania.¹²

When it comes to Macedonia, the 1999 Kosovo crisis was staved off only partially. Just in 2001 the country faced another challenge in the form of aggressive political actions of S. Milosevic and claims of Albanian minority. There were military clashes between the Macedonian army and Albanians living in the region close to the border with Kosovo. Facing a civil war, the Macedonian government requested support from NATO and UN. As Macedonia was in danger of losing its territorial integrity, Turkey supported this country within actions performed by NATO and EU and performed diplomatic actions. Since the very beginning the Turkish government has underlined the necessity of perseverance of the existing shape of Macedonia. The Turkish prime minister Bülent Ecevit and the minister of foreign affairs İsmail Cem vowed for NATO to intervene. At the same time Turkey actively co-operated with the USA in this matter; at the conference of ministers of foreign affairs of South-Eastern Europe, held in Skopje, three basic types of future operations were specified, i.e. the necessity to maintain territorial integrity of Macedonia, necessity to cease fire and to start negotiations. It should be mentioned that the purpose for which Turkey was active in solving this crisis was the will to maintain stability in the Balkans and the situation of Turkish people living in Macedonia; as the crisis intensified, they faced various attacks and thus started to request active participation of Turkey in solving the crisis¹³ and during his visit in Istanbul Erdoğan Saraç, the leader of Turkish Democratic Party in Macedonia, the key party representing Turkish minority, definitely underlined the necessity to maintain the existing shape of the state and opposed the idea of the creation of the Macedonian-Albanian federation within the state of Macedonia. Saraç declared that such an idea would threaten other ethnic minorities in this country, leading in the longer perspective to destabilization and chaos.¹⁴ This attitude explicitly shows the idea of argument between Albanians, who vowed to transfigure Macedonia into a two-nations country, and the government in Skopje that seemed to be able to agree only for decentralizing actions of the administrative kind. During negotiations monitored by the European Union the parties managed to reach the consensus resulting in signing the Ohrid Agreement in August 2001 that obliged the Macedonian government to implement decentralizing reforms of state administration, guaranteed Albanians participation in a public life and access to education in the Albanian language on the uni-

¹¹ 'Gıda bombardımanı', *Milliyet*, 2 April 1999, at <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1999/04/02/yasam/yas03.html>>, 30 August 2013.

¹² Ş. Kut, 'Türkiye'nin...', p. 119.

¹³ M. Bakacak, 'Uzlaşma Umudu Hızla Azalıyor', *Milliyet*, 12 June 2001, <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/06/19/guncel/gun03.html>>, 27 August 2013.

¹⁴ B. Demirtaş-Coşkun, E. Türkoğlu, 'Makedonya Bıçak Sırtında: Balkanlar'ın Eski "Model Ülkesi", Yeni İstikrarsızlık Unsuru mu?' in M. Hatipoğlu (ed.), *Dünden bugüne Makedonya Sorunu*, Ankara 2002, p. 135 (*Avrasya-Bir Vakfı Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi Yayınları*, 34. *Balkan Araştırmaları Dizisi*, 6).

versity level. On the other hand, the Albanian party declared to withdraw from performing violence in order to fight for its political goals. Moreover, in the municipalities (mac. opština) where any ethnic minority constituted more than 20% of population, its language was declared an official language, in case of Turkish people this rule applied, according to Turkish press, in nine towns and villages.¹⁵ According to the data published by Macedonian Ministry for Local Self-Government in April 2014, Turkish is nowadays considered as an official language in four (out of eighty four) municipalities of Macedonia.¹⁶

The signing of the Ohrid Agreement is a turning point in the Turkish-Macedonian relations. Active help and support provided by Ankara to the Skopje government in the year of three subsequent crises made further increase of political and economical co-operation possible. In the political context, Turkish support provided for Macedonia in the achievement of its basic, strategic goals, as integration with NATO and EU, turned out to be extremely significant. Having been an important member of NATO since 1952, Turkey participated in three NATO operations in Macedonia, i.e. Essential Harvest in 2001, Amber Fox in 2001-2003 and Allied Harmony in 2003. Ankara also joined the operation Concordia under the auspices of the EU, sending its military personnel and equipment. Intensified military co-operation in the form of financial support or various trainings for Macedonian army led to signing the agreement on Military Co-operation between two countries in December 2010.

Turkey has limited capabilities to support Macedonia in its integration with the EU. Officially, Ankara declares that Macedonia's access to the EU would be an additional factor of stabilization in the Balkan Peninsula. Since 2005 Macedonia has been a candidate country, but the main problem are its relations with Greece that still focus on the matter of nomenclature of the Macedonian state. In this context constant support of Turkey should be paid attention to; during his visit in Skopje in September 2011 prime minister R.T. Erdoğan said that the right to use the term "Republic of Macedonia" was "the most genuine right of the entire the Macedonian nation".¹⁷ Summing up, it should be stated that Ankara supports the government in Skopje in its strategic goals that remain consistent with Turkish policy; on the one hand we can notice care for stability in this region and traditional Turkish-Greek rivalry on the other hand.

Ironically, the strategic context of Turkish-Macedonian relations does not have its equivalent in mutual economical contacts, however there has been significant progress in this area, too. Attention should be paid mainly to trade exchange between both countries that have been co-operating within the Agreement on Free Trade since 2000.

¹⁵ S. Kohen, 'Türkler için daha iyi', *Milliyet*, 23 August 2001, at <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/turkler-icin-de-daha-iyi-sami-kohen/dunya/yazardetayarsiv/23.08.2001/80617/default.htm>>, 12 September 2013.

¹⁶ 'Citizens and the Municipality' [Document published by the Macedonian Ministry of Local Self-Government], at <<http://www.mls.gov.mk/data/file/Publikacii/local/CITIZENS%20ANS%20THE%20MUNICIPALITY.pdf>>, 19 April 2014.

¹⁷ 'AB'ye Bizden Önce Girersiniz', *Hürriyet*, 29 September 2001, at <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/18861206.asp>>, 14 September 2013.

In 2008 the value of balance of trade was 324.8 million USD, in 2009 323.343 million USD, in 2010 315.139 million USD and in the most prolific year of 2011 almost 400 million USD, than in 2012 it decreased slightly to 377.321 million USD. Within balance of trade between two countries there is a significant disproportion between import and export; the value of Turkish export to Macedonia is larger than import from it. For example, in 2011 the value of Turkish export to Macedonia was 298.861 million USD, whereas the value of goods exported from the latter country was 91.963 million USD. In the next year these values were respectively 274.497 million USD and 103.224 million USD.¹⁸

It should be underlined that despite political problems and arguments, Macedonia's largest economical and investment partner is still Greece. In late 1990s Greek companies were allowed to buy out strategic Macedonian enterprises; in 1999 Hellenic Petroleum purchased the refinery close to Skopje. Compared to Turkish investments in Macedonia, the range of Greek ones in this country is impressive; in 2011 Greek capital constituted almost 11% of all foreign assets invested in Macedonia.¹⁹ Some intensification in mutual economical relations took place in 2005, when Vlado Buckovski became prime minister. For example, in 2008 the Turkish company TAV was granted the contract for modernization and service of the airports in Skopje and Ohrid and the construction of a new one in Strip.²⁰ Currently, there are almost one hundred Turkish companies operating in Macedonia, however – as stated by Turkey – the serious obstacles in development of mutual trade contacts and investments are economical instability of Macedonia, long-lasting bureaucratic procedures, often changing law and the nontransparent fiscal system.²¹ All these factors contributed to the situation that although being a key political partner of Macedonia, Turkey loses the economical rivalry with Greece and other countries of the European Union.

In conclusion, we should underline the strategic characteristics of the Turkish-Macedonian relations. For Macedonia they matter in the context of its arguments with neighbouring countries and own political weakness, while for Turkey they are a continuation of its policy against the Balkans implemented after the end of the Cold War, being the part of traditional rivalry of this country with Greece as well.

In this context, while analyzing whole Turkey's attitude towards Macedonia we should also mention a strategic shift in the Turkish foreign policy making, which is linked with domestic changes in that country that took place after 2002 when pro-

¹⁸ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [Turkish Statistical Institute], <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046>, 10 August 2013.

¹⁹ 'International Investment Position of the Republic of Macedonia for 2011', National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia – Statistics Department, September 2012, at <http://www.nbrm.mk/WBStorage/Files/Statistika_Annual_report_IIP_2011.pdf>, 10 September 2013.

²⁰ 'TAV, Makedonya Ohrid Havalimanı'nı Yeniledi', *Zaman*, 10 April 2011, at <http://www.zaman.com.tr/ekonomi_tav-makedonya-ohrid-havalimanini-yeniledi_1119889.html>, 16 September 2013.

²¹ 'Makedonya Cumhuriyeti'nin Ekonomisi', Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs], at <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/makedonya-cumhuriyeti-ekonomisi.tr.mfa>>, 7 August 2013.

-Islamic Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power. Electoral success in three consecutive elections (in 2007 and 2011) made it both possible for this party to create a non-coalition government and thus to implement new, constant foreign policy making strategy. Together with the carrying out of domestic reforms JDP's officials decided to implement a new vision of foreign policy which differs from the one that Turkey had in the 1990's. While arguing that post-cold War period was a lost time, when Turkey failed to use all the opportunities that had been created in the international environment, they proposed a normative conception based on famous academic, professor Ahmet Davutoğlu's "strategic depth" conception. He soon became a chief advisor to prime minister Erdoğan, and in 2009 a Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. According to Davutoğlu, who is an author of a famous and lively commented book entitled "Strategic depth – Turkey's international position" Turkey is a country that has all the abilities to become first a regional, than a global power. Although Turkey failed to take advantage of its historical and geographical potentials in the first years after the Cold War she still is able to achieve crucial status in her region. According to him the states which experienced tremendous shifts in the global politics (for example such as at the end of the Cold War) are those that have so-called historical and geographical depth. The first one should be described as: "A country that is always at the epicenter of events, whatever they may be [...] Countries like Turkey, China, and Japan have deep historical roots in their regions [...] During the transit from 19th to 20th century, there were eight multi-national empires across Eurasia: Britain, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, China, Japan and Turkey. Now, these countries are experiencing very similar problems with their respective regions. Germany has experienced in Eastern Europe similar headaches to those felt by Turkey in the Balkans and the Middle East. As these countries possess historical depth they form spheres of influence; if they fail to do this they then experience various problems."²² Also the geographical depth should be perceived as a part of Turkey's historical one: "Turkey is not just and only an old Mediterranean country. One important characteristic that distinguishes Turkey from say Romania or Greece is that Turkey is at the same time a Middle East and Caucasus country. Unlike Germany, Turkey is as much European country as it is an Asian one. Indeed, Turkey is as much as a Black Sea country as it is a Mediterranean one. This geographical depth places Turkey right at the center of many geopolitical areas of influence."²³ Turkey's historical and geographical potential is also strengthened by its close civilizational links to neighboring regions, and all of them are the core of the "strategic depth" conception which can be considered as a normative strategy with a clear purpose of the transformation of Turkey's regional and global role. Davutoğlu also creates five principles to guide Turkish foreign policy making, which are: Balance between freedom and democracy, Zero problems with the neighbours,

²² A. Davutoğlu, "The Power Turkey Does Not Use Is That of "Strategic Depth", *Turkish Daily News*, 14 June 2001, at <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-power-turkey-does-not-use-is-that-of-strategic-depth.aspx?pageID=438&n=the-power-turkey-does-not-use-is-that-of-strategic-depth-2001-06-14>>, 1 December 2013.

²³ Ibid.

Multidimensional and multi-track policies, A new diplomatic discourse based on firm flexibility and rhythmic diplomacy.²⁴ While considering Turkey's relations with Macedonia, the "multidimensional and multi-track policies" together with "rhythmic diplomacy" have a special meaning in the foreign policy making process. The first one means that Turkey puts far more attention and emphasis on economic and cultural relations while benefiting from the involvement of the private sector in foreign affairs. As it has been showed above Turkish trade relations with Macedonia improved greatly in import-export terms, and since 2008 continuous progress is clearly visible; it should be also noticed that cooperation of the Turkish political elite and business sector stimulates Turkish private-sector activities within Macedonia. Turkish businessmen gathered in such private sector organizations like Turkish Exporters Assembly (tur. Türkiye İhracatçılar Meclisi, TİM), The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (tur. Türkiye Odalar ve Borslar Birliği, TOBB), Independent Industrialists' and Businessman's' Association (tur. Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği, MÜSİAD), Turkish Confederation of Businessman and Industrialists (tur. Türkiye İş Adamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu, TUSKON) become an immanent part of Turkish official delegations during their visits to Macedonia. The Turkish-Macedonian Business Council has been established with a view to tight economic cooperation and trade exchange between two countries.²⁵ Turkish private sector representatives have intensive contacts with their Macedonian counterparts within the Balkan Union of Trade Chambers. Although, as it was mentioned, Turkish activism in Macedonia experiences several problems in the economic activity terms, one has to notice that the incorporation of the private sector in foreign policy making process is a new quality, and a mark of the JDP's influence over it.

Multidimensional and multi-track foreign policy means also that such issues like soft power and public diplomacy became important in Turkey's foreign policy making. That is also in the case of this country's relations with Macedonia. The main entity responsible for that is Turkish International and Cooperation Agency (tur. Türk İşbirliği ve Kooperasyon Ajansı, TİKA) that works in favor of improving living conditions and general development in developing countries, especially Turkey's neighboring counties or populated by Turkish minority. While improvement of social, economical, commercial, technical, cultural and educational cooperation through projects and programs is an aim²⁶, TİKA is also carrying out its activity in Macedonia. For instance, one of the programs called "The Balkans and Eastern Europe" contributed to development in several areas by implementing several minor projects as its part. For example within the scope of the "Project of Modification and Furnishing of Schools," the maintenance and repairing of 10 previously damaged schools which are located in different regions

²⁴ More about this conception see: idem, *Stratejik derinlik. Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu*, İstanbul 2011 (*BSV Kitaplığı*, 1. Küre Yayınları / *Stratejik Araştırmalar*, 1).

²⁵ "Türkiye-Makedonya İlişkileri", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs], at <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-makedonya-cumhuriyeti-siyasi-iliskileri-tr.mfa>>, 3 December 2013.

²⁶ TİKA [TİKA official web site], at <<http://www.tika.gov.tr/tika-hakkinda/1>>, 3 December 2013.

throughout the country. In cooperation with local municipalities, the project provided 3,600 students to get their education in proper conditions. Also since the clear-water reservoirs in Latsa Village in the Resne Municipality and Ocali Village in the Karbintsi Municipality could not meet local needs, new water pipelines have been installed and new water-systems have been built within the scope of "Projects of Drinking Water in Latsa and Ocali Villages." For making a contribution to rural development and reinvigorating the economy of eastern Macedonia which has been experiencing serious difficulties, "Project of Development of Apiculture" has been carried out. At the end of the 3-year project, it was intended to provide a side income for 76 families by distributing honey-producing hives. Besides with an aim of exhibiting the cultural artifacts and making a contribution to cultural tourism, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in cooperation with the Directorate of Turkish Religious Foundation, has been carrying out restoration of Mustafa Paşa Mosque in Skopje that is one of the most important mosques of the Ottoman era. What is more, within the scope of the "Project of Bridge Construction in Aracinova Municipality," the bridge linking the Aracinova Municipality, that is located southeast of Skopje and at the same time is one of the smallest municipalities of the country with the average population of 12,000 inhabitants, to Skopje Metropolitan Municipality, has been successfully reconstructed.²⁷ All projects like this, together with growing business activity, constitute a new dimension of Turkey's foreign policy towards Macedonia during JDP period. Is also worth noticing that in recent years Turkey made it possible for Macedonian students to participate in several programs of academic exchange, by setting governmental program of scholarships. One of the leading one is the Balkan Program which is a part of so called "Great Students Exchange Program" – it made possible for nearly 85 Macedonians students to study in Turkey between 2012-2013.²⁸

Summarizing it should be noticed that Turkish foreign policy towards Macedonia gained new impetus during the JDP's term in power. As it was said after the Cold War Turkey started to build good relations with the newly created Macedonian state, however they were mainly focused on bilateral political and security relations. The implementation of "strategic depth" conception opened the new horizons for Turkish foreign policy makers. Such issues like trade, cultural, educational and social cooperation became an immanent part of bilateral relations and without doubt will work in favor of deepening traditionally good contacts between Ankara and Skopje.

It is also interesting that Turkish foreign policy towards the Balkans, and Macedonia as well, is often perceived as an example of Neo-Ottoman ambitions shared by the Justice and Development Party and Turkish political elites. Such statement usually have two main authors – domestic, Kemalist elite which nowadays forms a main opposition force against R.T. Erdoğan and his supporters, and while considering activities in the

²⁷ 'Balkanlar ve Doğu Avrupa – Proje ve faaliyetler', TİKA, at <http://store.tika.gov.tr/yayinlar/kurumsal-yayinlar/balkanlar_tr.pdf>, 21 December 2013.

²⁸ All the data from Türkiye Bursları [Turkish Scholarships Official Website], at <<http://www.turkiye-burslari.gov.tr/index.php/tr/>>, 29 December 2013.

Balkan Peninsula – Greece, that perceives current Turkish activism in the Balkans as a revival of Ottoman, imperialistic agenda. Although up till now there is no coherent definition of what Neo-Ottomanism is, there is a strong belief that in current Turkish foreign policy we have to do with something “Ottoman” and that JDP is an initiator of such policy. As Richard Falk points out: “[Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s chief advisor for foreign policy, current Foreign Affairs Minister, Ahmet] Davutoğlu represents a new cultural and political trend in Turkey associated with a deliberative revival of the Ottoman past, both as a matter of cultural enrichment, but also as a source of enriched Turkish identity as a political actor. What Davutoğlu particularly celebrates is what we call the ‘accommodative’ character of the Ottoman Empire in its height, that is, the willingness to appreciate and respect civilizational and ethnic diversity, and to deal with political conflict in a spirit of compromise and reconciliation”.²⁹ Here it should be also noticed that the policy of describing the Ottoman Empire and its “accommodative” character towards the Balkan states has a serious limitation and it should be sometimes treated as an obstacle in creation of good relations while several states and nations of this region were simply subjected to the Ottoman Empire for several centuries.³⁰ It is worth noticing that this is not the case of Macedonia where bilateral partnership with Turkey is considered as a necessity.

Summarizing one can claim that although the Justice and Development Party and Davutoğlu enriched Turkish foreign policy by adding new elements to it, the attitude towards Macedonia remains mainly the same as it was in the 1990’s. Turkey perceives this state as a strategic partner and permanently tries to intensify contacts, as it has been showed above since JDP term in power, not only in the area of politics and diplomacy, but also in the terms of culture and education. On the other hand we should notice that good contacts and relations with Ankara are a strategic issue for Skopje, especially while considering its disputes with the Greek government. In general, the foreign policy of Turkey towards Macedonia in the post-Cold War period should be characterized through the context of various challenges that Ankara had to deal with in the international environment. First, in the immediate post-Cold War era, Ankara’s foreign policy was made to set new goals, new areas of activity. While in that time foreign policy makers remained a part of Kemalist intellectual elite, and were under constant military pressure, the activities towards Macedonia were mainly focused on building good bilateral relations, proper neighbourhood and stability climate with a prior role of security, as an ultimate purpose of foreign policy. The economic weakness of Turkey at that time made it hard to conduct intense relations in the terms of trade and economy in general, however such attempts had been made and are reflected in the several bilateral agreements with Macedonian government. The second period started when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s political party became a leading force of Turkish politics and put a “strate-

²⁹ R. Falk, ‘Reconsidering Turkey’, *Zaman*, 6 October 2004, at <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-Detail_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=96E2FCDB962360CDFC5FF694DA3D52FD?newsId=12579>, 15 December 2013.

³⁰ Ş. Kut, *Balkanlar’da kimlik ve egemenlik*, İstanbul 2005, p. 219 (*İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları*, 117. *Siyaset Bilimi*, 15).

gic depth” conception into practice. Internal economical success combined with new perception of trade in international environment paved the way to various cultural, educational and social activities that nowadays remain a part of Turkish foreign policy towards Macedonia. Although not necessary successful in economic terms, Turkey remains a crucial and strategic partner for Macedonia, thus Justice and Development Party foreign policy makers continue a strategy that has been started by a different political elite in the early 1990’s. The question if “strategic depth” would led Turkey to the status of regional, and then global power, remains still open, however it should be stated that the dominant or, as it is sometimes called, “big brother” position in relations with Macedonia greatly improves both Turkish prestige and a meaning in the Balkans as well as it is a tool envisaged to counterbalance the Greek influence over the whole region. This kind of policy also is immanent part of whole strategy towards this part of world. Since the end of the Cold War, when new international circumstances occurred, the Balkan Peninsula is considered as crucial for Turkish political and economical security and in general, an attitude towards the Macedonia overlaps with such perception, although recently strengthened by new factors of foreign policy making, added by the Justice and Development Party which is currently in power.

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