



THE BALKAN EXPRESS

A NEW TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

There is a 'non-academic' definition of the geographical determination of the Central Europe according to which this term includes areas and countries where one can buy a Sacher Cake in patisseries. Following this definition, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) clearly belongs to Central Europe. With respect to Turkey, by using an analogue metaphor its foreign policy influence could be said to be limited to the areas which baklava managed to 'reach'. However, the potential (mis)use of the name baklava contributes to the thesis on the existence of boundaries of the Turkish influence in the Balkans. For example, one cannot order baklava in Banja Luka because it is now called 'Tzar's Pie' there. The question that arises is why is baklava still called baklava in Belgrade, but not in Banja Luka? And, is BiH still a country where Sacher Cake and baklava meet, or has baklava come into a conflict of interests with Sacher Cake at the territory of BiH?

Turkish foreign policy has thus once again become a victim of bad definitions and terminological misunderstandings, this time on the territory of BiH.

One of the basic dilemmas that from time to time get into the Turkey's way towards the European Union (EU) has been caused exactly by a lack of precise definition of the very term *Europe*. In the Treaty of Maastricht only Article 49 deals with the EU enlargement and its controversy lies in the imprecision of the formulation saying that any European state may apply to become a Member of the Union. Subsequently, this formulation has been complemented by the Copenhagen criteria; however, in the absence of a generally accepted understanding of who does or does not belong to Europe, this controversy remains to serve as an excuse to the newly awaken opponents of Turkey joining the EU.

While the EU fights its own ambiguities affecting the perception of its role in the closest surroundings, Turkey has realized that the center of gravity is slowly shifting, in its favour. The new multipolarity has opened room where greater possibilities are being created for Turkey to influence the situation in its neighborhood. This is also due to a different understanding of the geography. From the European perspective, Turkey is located at the end of Europe. However, the new Turkish foreign policy places Turkey in the centre of a wider region comprising Russia, Central Asia, Middle East and the Balkans. Or, if we take this a step further, geography has nothing do with it any more. In this understanding of multipolarity, the interest spheres are not being determined by geography, but by the potential and distribution of different interests in the field of safety, economy, energy, infrastructure, culture, etc. This way of thinking has given rise to the recent Turkish policy "zero problems with neighbours", which caused some disorientation in international politics, particularly from the perspective of the EU and the United States of America (USA).

NEO-OTTOMANISM OR NEO-MULTILATERALISM

Exactly this kind of confusion has given rise to a number of different attempts to explain the new Turkish policy. The first explanation provides that Turkey, after realizing how Russia strengthened its position in its close neighborhood, decided to behave like the new Russia. The question is, however, is there a "Turkish Georgia" or "Turkish Ukraine" then and how far Turkey could go with such politics? This question as such is already contradictory to the "zero problems with neighbors" policy, which eliminates explanations like this one.

Another explanation is that the different policy of Turkey has been irritated by the new wave of doubt with regard to further enlargement among EU members, and that Turkey decided to show that it is a global player as well, and that it is in position to cope with the challenges of regional politics in a more efficient manner than the EU. There is numerous evidence supporting this argument – geographic proximity, good knowledge of the mentality and needs in the neighboring countries, their histories, culture, tradition, etc. However, a more important argument may be lying in the fact that, unlike the bureaucratically oversized and too complicated European Union, Turkey has the freedom and flexibility to put its new paradigm and policy into action swiftly and efficiently and, in this sense, to link its political and economic instruments. Unlike the European funds that are being planned for years in advance (when the priorities may not even be relevant any more) and which are accompanied by gruesome procedures, the Turkish funds are available right away and are being adapted to suit the political priorities. There are no complicated decision making procedures,

policy is being created at and implemented from the same place. The interest of Turkish policy is clear, as is the support of public for this kind of policy, which is always under a question mark in the EU.

The third explanation is that the new Turkish policy is a reflection of internal political ambitions before the 2011 elections and the desire to represent the current authorities to its own electorate as a new regional and global power. Explanations like this always carry certain amount of truth.

According to the fourth explanation, the background of Turkish engagement, especially in the Balkans and Middle East, is ideological in nature and it is related to a historical and religious dimension. This is the source of debates about the rise of Neo-Ottomanism which clashes with Kemalism and is challenging the secularism of Turkey even in its foreign policy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoglu additionally encourages these doubts with the statements such as the one given in 2009 regarding the revival of the 'Ottoman Balkans'. The fact is, however, that, in the meantime, he publicly distanced himself on several occasions from any 'Neo-Ottoman' ambitions and that he persistently emphasizes Turkey's commitment to the European and Atlantic orientation. Nevertheless, in order to get a deeper understanding of the Turkish foreign policy, it is necessary to take into account its ideological grounds, which is in part a product of the academic work of the Minister Davutoglu.

The fifth explanation partly leans onto this thesis and provides that the new Turkish foreign policy represents a reaction to the new type of multipolarity on the global scene, which provides all players with the same opportunities. The question is, therefore, whether Turkey is really ready and has capacities to be a global player, or is it just a regional player, and whether this new foreign policy is just a reflection of a change in discourse?

'STRATEGIC DEPTH' IN THE BALKANS

An important peculiarity and novelty introduced into Turkish foreign policy in 2009 by the Minister Ahmet Davutoglu arises from the fact that he is an academic and international relations theorist who, after the Prime Minister Erdogan's AK party won the elections, was given the opportunity to apply in practice his own paradigms, which he developed in his academic work. Because of this, he has been called the 'Turkish Henry Kissinger' and long before officially becoming a minister of foreign affairs he was considered to be a 'shadow foreign minister' i.e. the actual creator of Turkish foreign policy behind the scene.

A book called "Strategic Depth" published by the Minister Davutoglu in 2001 introduces a completely new way of thinking about the international position of Turkey. The term "strategic depth" has been borrowed from the military terminology and it denotes the space i.e. the distance between the first lines of defense and civil and industrial areas i.e. cities and settled areas. The importance of 'strategic depth' is in the possibilities it offers for withdrawal and defense from attack, while avoiding damage to own power sources and centers. Therefore, the essence of 'strategic depth' is in the relation between time and space.

In line with this, the main thesis of Davutoglu's book is that the influence of a country in international relations is determined by its geostrategic position and historical depth. According to Davutoglu's theory, Turkey has a double advantage in that sense, because it is positioned in geostrategic zones of strong influence and it is historically enriched by the Ottoman Empire influences. Although Turkish foreign policy has not paid that much attention to cultural ties and shared history up to now, in his book Davutoglu presents an argument for strengthening the ties with the Balkans, Middle East and Central Asia. On a practical level, 'Strategic Depth' upholds establishing balance in regard to Turkish sole dependence on the West through creation of several parallel alliances in the region. Thus, dependence of Turkey on any individual power would be prevented and, instead, balance would be created in relations and alliances with the countries in the region, thus achieving relative independence and a more concrete influence at the regional and global level.

Exactly this way of comprehending the Turkish foreign policy was presented by the Minister Davutoglu in his speech given on 16 October 2009 in Sarajevo at the opening ceremony of the Conference 'Ottoman Heritage and Muslim Communities in the Balkans Today'. When talking about strategic depth, Davutoglu explained that what he meant by that was the historical depth between Turkey and the Balkans. In his speech he underlined: "...when we speak of the Balkans, usually we think that the Balkan region is a periphery of Europe, not the center of Europe, but the periphery of Europe. Is it so? Is the Balkan region really a periphery? No. In fact, the Balkan region is in a strategic center between Afro-Euro-Asia."

With respect to particularities of the Balkans and the position it held within the Ottoman Empire, he said: "Three characteristics of the Balkans can be identified. The first is that the Balkan region is a buffer zone in a geopolitical sense. Usually it is seen as a buffer zone in transition from Europe to Asia, from Asia to Europe, from Baltics to the Mediterranean, even to Africa, from North to South, from East to West it is a geopolitical buffer zone. I will explain what this means, why it is so important, and why this characteristic had such an impact on the history of the Balkans. The second

characteristic is the geo-economic characteristic. The Balkan region has been a region of transaction in a geo-economic sense. From the ancient times until today, the Balkan region has been a region of economic transaction. The Balkan region is a region of geo-cultural interaction. Several cultures interacted in the Balkans. During migrations many nations came into contact and mixed with others. If you have a region with these three characteristics, a geo-political buffer zone, geo-cultural interaction and geo-economic transaction, you have two alternative destinies in history. One destiny is that you can be either the center of world politics, or you will have to be the victim of world competition which means that you will have to be a periphery of another power“.

However, the rest of the Minister’s speech caused a number of controversies. This particularly pertains to the claim that the ‘historical depth’ of the new Turkish foreign policy is based on return to the legacy of traditional and historical ties that this country has had with the countries in the surrounding three regions. Bearing in mind exactly the history of the Balkans, not just the Ottoman one, but the recent history of relations between the countries in the region, one would expect more political sensitivity for the space and time i.e. for the internal ‘historical depth’ of the Balkans itself. Although it is very difficult to point a finger at any notion of Ottoman aspirations from the very words of the Minister Davutoglu, the fact is that any attempt to place the Balkans and the attribute ‘Ottoman’ in the same sentence will cause certain political uneasiness. Therefore, for the purpose of giving an accurate account of the intentions presented at this event, it is necessary to directly quote Minister Davutoglu’s words: “We want to have a new Balkan region, based on political dialogue, economic interdependency and cooperation, integration and cultural harmony and tolerance. This was the Ottoman Balkan. We will reestablish such Balkans. People are calling me neo-Ottoman, therefore I don’t want to refer to the Ottoman state as a foreign policy issue. What I am underlining is the Ottoman legacy. The Ottoman centuries of the Balkans were success stories. Now we have to reinvent this“.

Therefore, although in the Balkans it almost comes as natural to decontextualize some person’s political statements and ascribe to them completely emotional connotations, the rejection of Davutoglu’s policy as Neo-Ottoman would be too superficial politically and could only serve the purpose of instrumentalising the local political ‘tit for tat-s-’. Davutoglu underlines the Ottoman dimension neither because of the nostalgia for the colonialism, nor because of certain inherited religious-national emotional ties, but because of the multidimensionality of the politics at the time from which he draws inspiration to shift the current foreign policy games to several regional fields at the same time. And not only that, but, in each of these fields, the new Turkish foreign policy multiplies itself and reaches into several dimensions – political, economic, safety, cultural, etc. In international relations theory this approach is being compared with the ‘three-dimensional chess

game' in which, apart from the standard two dimensions, the chess board has the third one where each move is made not only in relation to the two dimensions, but also in relation to the vertical position of the chess pieces.

There is too much evidence on multidimensionality of Turkish foreign policy, but we will name only some of the examples. Turkey has intensified the relations with and changed its approach towards Iran, Syria, Israel, but also toward Georgia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and, of course, Russia.

In May 2010, the Prime Minister Erdogan paid a historical visit to Greece, accompanied by ten Turkish ministers and over 100 entrepreneurs, during the course of which the first joint meeting ever of the governments of Turkey and Greece was held. The importance of this visit particularly increased, having in mind the fact that it was organized at the peak of Greek financial crisis, which demonstrated at least symbolic solidarity on the Turkish part, and a number of interstate agreements have been signed as well. The problem of divided Cyprus, of course, keeps casting a shade on the relations between these two countries; however, the essence of the policy of the Turkish government is the establishment of a *rapprochement* instead of hasty solutions to all disputable issues, and that is where its value should be sought.

Russia is Turkey's biggest trade partner today and their trade exchange amounts to about 40 billion per year, while Turkey is the biggest consumer of Russian gas after Germany. In May 2010, these two countries signed an Agreement on mutual abolition of visas, which is of particular importance having in mind that 2.2 million Russian tourists visit only the area of Antalya every year, and this number is expected to increase to 5 million in the following two years. There has also been an Interstate Cooperation Council established and there have been 17 bilateral agreements signed. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the signing of the Protocol on Cooperation between Turkey and Armenia in August last year.

Visas have also been abolished for the citizens of Lebanon for the first time since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The visit of the Prime Minister Hariri to Ankara opened the path for better cooperation between the two countries with a history of strong animosity caused by a number of factors such as the transfer of tens of thousands Armenians from Turkey to Lebanon during the First World War and the good relations between Turkey and Israel, which Lebanon does not recognize officially. The result of this cooperation is the establishment of a dialogue between Sunnis and Shiites in Lebanon. This warming of relations was preceded by a number of meetings between the officials from Turkey and Syria, abolishment of visas for the citizens of Syria and the establishment of an Interstate Cooperation Council. These efforts resulted in making possible the negotiations between Syria and Israel. Turkey joined the negotiations with regard to nuclear weapons in Iran and

established a more intensive dialogue with Armenia with which it signed a number of bilateral agreements, and it helped to establish a dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Following a similar principle, Turkey initiated the development of the Caucasus Platform for Stability and Cooperation following the crisis in Georgia.

Intensive political engagement on the international scene has been accompanied by an intensive growth of Turkish economy in the last few years. Turkey is the 17th largest economy in the world and 8th largest economy in Europe. It is among rare countries that have found a relatively painless way out of the economic crisis, with the 6% growth in the last quarter of 2009. Goldman Sachs forecast foresees that Turkey's economy could surpass Germany by 2050. In 2001, the size of Turkey's economy equaled one tenth of Germany's economy, and already now it amounts to one fifth. If it keeps this growth rate, Turkey's economy could surpass Germany even before this deadline. Privatization of energy, financial services and gas sector has been sped up and a large increase in direct foreign investment has been recorded in all sectors. There are plans to establish a regional financial services centre in Istanbul, which would include Greece and Middle East, while Investment Support and Promotion Agency (ISPAT) has been established recently. Turkey's population is young with the average age of 27 in comparison to the European average of 40 years.

TURKEY = EASTERN BALKANS

The aforementioned inventory of the Turkey's international involvement during the past two years puts on a completely different level the relationship of Turkey towards the Western Balkan countries. Surprised by the sudden desire for cooperation appearing among the BiH and Serbian officials, the BiH public craved for the idea that our country would be once again in the exclusive center of attention of a world power. The BiH public has thus split into those that are emotionally-euphoric and those that pragmatically-skeptical about Turkey's new role. However, the intensity and scope of the involvement of Turkey in other countries and regions precisely confirms the policy "zero problems with the neighbors", and according to that, the Balkans are being addressed as a part of such Turkish foreign policy, and no other special reason. It simply got there due to a geographical necessity which is underlined by Davutoglu's new paradigm.

By applying the same philosophy and methods as in other problematic regions, Turkey tailors its policy towards each of the Balkan countries according to the assessment of its own interests as well as the interests of each country individually. It determines mechanisms and instruments with which it manages to bring to the table officials of the countries that, for years, have failed to do so by

themselves. Minister Davutoglu claims that this approach is not the matter of opportunism, but of firm principles. Those principles do not change; they demand and impose the same approach in different regions.

An important determinant of this involvement is the sense of Turkey's belonging to the Balkan region, which, on a very banal level, is manifested even through political terminology. Unlike the EU, which has, for the purpose of being politically correct, invented the term Western Balkans, Turkey, very reassuringly, uses the term Balkans without any fear of implying any kind of negative terminological connotations. To a very cynical question 'what is Eastern Balkans, if this region is its western part?', the European diplomats have no answer, while the Turkish diplomats give a very witty answer, that the East Balkans is Turkey. In that sense, Minister Davutoglu offers a very clear explanation why Turkey decided to re-board the 'Balkan Express': "The sooner we rid the Balkans of its problems, the sooner we will strengthen the economical integration, and we will provide for an easier integration of our region into the European and the Euro-Atlantic institutions like the EU and NATO. NATO and EU membership is the common goal of all of the Balkan countries."

The inventory of the Turkey's activities in the Balkans supports this thesis. Turkey's involvement in Kosovo, Sandžak, BiH, Albania, Croatia and Serbia has become quite intense.

During the July visit to Serbia, meetings were held at the highest level with a large number of representatives of both Governments. Several bilateral agreements were signed, primarily of economical nature, and concerning infrastructural projects, and several Turkish investments have been announced in Serbia. Turkey will thus participate in the construction of the part of the highway Belgrade – South Adriatic, Belgrade – Požega and part of the highway from Novi Pazar to Aljinovići. There were also some talks of opening of Lađevinci Airport near Kraljevo. During just a single visit of the Turkish delegation to Serbia a road was opened for free trade between the two countries as well as the establishment of the visa free regime. Until this agreement was signed, Serbia was the only country in the Balkans that still had a visa regime with Turkey. During the visit to Novi Pazar, a Turkish culture center was opened.

In their press statement during and after the visit to Serbia, the Prime Minister Erdogan and Minister Davutoglu have consistently stuck to the politics of common interests of the two countries, economy, prosperity and peace. That was evident even during their visit to Sandžak. On the other hand, the Serbian officials could not resist talking about specific emotional and cultural links. Thus, President Tadić has, on several occasions, emphasized the 'historical depth' with the statements like "the role of Turkey is great just like its influence and credibility in the Western Balkan area, just as the role of Serbia is great". Tadić also announced the construction of a big Islamic cultural center

which will, as he had stated, "show, once again, the multi-ethnicity and multi-religiousness of Serbia. That will be the center where Islamic and Turkish culture will be studied as well as our historic bonds".

Furthermore, the visit to Novi Pazar was accompanied by an abundance of symbolism which was more of a construction a new one rather than emphasizing the actual connection between Turkey and Sandžak. Banners of welcome greetings in Turkish were set all across the town, and the flags of Turkey as well as the Bosniak national flag, and the flags of the two biggest Bosniak parties in Sandžak were flying high. That same night, on the TRT Turk a two hour long program on Serbia was shown, about the cultural bonds of the two countries, the similarities of their languages through the usage of the words of Turkish origin in Serbian language, gastronomic similarities, Turkish influence on the Serbian folklore and music, culminating in Sulejman Ugljanin addressing the Turkish public in relatively fluent Turkish. However, the Turkish delegation in Sandžak was very cautious concerning taking sides in the inter-Bosniak conflict in Sandžak, and has, as it was mentioned in some other examples here, opted for dialogue and compromise. They met with the leaders of both of the Bosniak parties, while, during the opening of the Turkish cultural center, the protocol prevented the presence of the Mufti Zukorlić, as well as of the delegation of the Islamic Community of Serbia lead by Reis-Ul-Ulema (the Grand Mufti) Adem Zilkić. During the opening ceremony of the Turkish cultural center in the spirit of cooperation and construction of spiritual bridges, only few hundred meters away the police had to set up multiple cordons and prevent a conflict between the followers of the two Islamic leaders. The Turkey's view of the inter-Bosniak conflict in Sandžak is not at all naive and it is a reflection of a profound understanding of current circumstances in the region. It is reflected in the fact that Mufti Zukorlić was not included in any of the protocol activities during the visit to Novi Pazar, and apparently he was even previously warned from the Turkish side, that his parallel religious and political involvement are unacceptable, which he, supposedly, decided to ignore.

In order to project an embellished image of bilateral relations, the issue of the independence of Kosovo was swept under the rug. Turkey openly advocates the recognition of Kosovo in a number of countries, and through a strong diplomatic involvement and influence in countries such as Azerbaijan, Qatar, Libya, and by urging the representatives of Syria and Greece to meet with the official representatives of Kosovo. In spite of that fact, the President of Serbian Government, Cvetković and President Tadić gave moderate statements during the visit of Turkish delegation, in which they made clear that the issue of Kosovo will not obstruct the development of relations between Turkey and Serbia.

The highlights of the change of direction of Turkish policy towards Serbia are the statements of the Prime Minister Erdogan and Minister Davutoglu that Serbia is the key country in the creation of new era of relations in the Balkans. Minister Davutoglu elaborates this view in detail in the article published in "Politika" (Politics) under the title: "Turkey and Serbia are the key countries in the Balkans". It is interesting, or maybe even indicative, that there were no reactions to this statement from BiH. For the sake of comparison, we recollect the case of the current Foreign Affairs Minister of Slovakia and the former High Representative in BiH, Miroslav Lajčák, whose similar statement made less than two years ago caused an avalanche of negative reactions from Bosniak leaders. This raises a question as to how the new direction of Turkish policy in the Balkans has caused a change of discourse among the political leaders in BiH.

'FAKE MUSICIANS'

Even though the Istanbul Declaration from April 2010 was preceded by a number of trilateral meetings at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BiH, Turkey and Serbia, still, as a symbol of new relations between BiH and Serbia, we take this document, which legally is of no great importance, but has, in political sense, caused turbulent reactions. In the meeting, which the Serbian media have assessed as historic, principles directed towards strengthening of security and cooperation in the region were agreed upon. Within that frame, it was arranged that members of BiH Presidency would soon visit Belgrade, and the Turkish diplomats still expect this to take place before the October elections in BiH. President Tadić, and Prime Minister Erdogan have visited Srebrenica on the 15th anniversary of genocide, and the Serbian Assembly has adopted the Declaration on Srebrenica. Serbian President Boris Tadić had stated in Istanbul, where he had participated in a trilateral meeting with the President of Turkey Abdullah Gül and the Chairman of the BiH Presidency Haris Silajdžić, that the common interest of all of the three countries is the EU membership, and that the Istanbul Summit represents a "new beginning" in their relations. Tadić, Gül and Silajdžić agreed that they will continue working on construction of peace, prosperity and stability in the Balkans. Also, an agreement was made that the trilateral meetings are held in each of the three counties during the next three years. The Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Haris Silajdžić said that he was glad that Tadić emphasized in Istanbul that Serbia will never do anything that could harm the integrity and sovereignty of BiH, and that it "brings peace and serenity into our hearts".

The rest of this story, and its continuation in BiH, is more or less known and expected. The Serbian member of the BiH Presidency, Nebojša Radmanović, proclaimed that the Silajdžić's signature on

the Istanbul Declaration is unconstitutional, and the Prime minister of RS, Milorad Dodik, proclaimed that the entire Declaration is 'non-existent'. For this reason, a meeting was organized between President Tadić and the Authority of Republika Srpska at the end of May in Laktaši, where the RS made its opinion on the Declaration known to the Serbian President. After an evident improvement of relations between Serbia and Turkey, in public appearances of the RS officials one could have heard statements that were previously unthinkable; that Serbia can do so because 'Serbia is a different state'. Even though every political distancing between Serbia and the RS is a pleasant thing for the ears of Bosniak leaders, a question rises of how closer can Sarajevo and Belgrade get and how far can they reach without including Banja Luka. Or to put it differently, what is the interest in getting closer with Serbia if this hampers any attempt to bring closer the views of Sarajevo and Banja Luka? According to the Turkish diplomats, that is not the final goal. Their final goal is getting all of the actors from BiH aboard the 'Balkan Express'. However, can the Balkan Express that has already left the station accept the 'fake musicians' like the characters from the Branko Baletić's film 'Balkan Express', or will this train have to wait for new passengers that will have no problem with baklava.

AN ACTOR WITH A VISION

Asked by the media where he sees Turkey in the future, Minister Davutoglu answers that on the one hundredth anniversary of the Republic of Turkey in 2023, he sees his country as a member of the EU, which is continuing to have an effective role within the NATO and which has a prominent role in the economic bodies like G20 as well. It is also an answer to the question of Turkish orientation, that is, whether Turkey is turning to the East at the expense of the West. Considering the fact that Turkey's answers are clear, this is more a question for the representatives of the western powers. It is the matter of how they will see and accept the new role of Turkey on the international scene. In that sense, Minister Davutoglu reminds that the relations in the world must not be viewed in the Cold War manner, but rather consider a completely new nature of relations in the world, that is a new kind of multipolarity where Turkey has clearly recognized its role and accepted it, without waiting for the approval of others. Colloquially speaking, Turkey 'gets it' while others still don't.

In that sense, the dilemma whether Turkey is a global or a regional force loses its relevance. Turkey acts regionally, but thinks globally. In this kind of understanding of the international relations, it is impossible and quite unnecessary to separate the two. According to the words of Minister Davutoglu, to be the ally of other powers means to be inclusive, and not exclusive.

However, in its relationship towards the Balkans, Turkey is expected to be more cautious. Even though its goals are clear, the expectations of local politicians remain unclear. In their public appearances, Turkish officials have clearly restrained themselves from emphasizing the traditional and historic bonds, which are, as it was mentioned earlier, the base of the new Turkish policy, that is, the understanding of the 'historical depth'. On the other hand, local politicians in Serbia, BiH, and within BiH in the RS, place too much of an emphasis to the historic lessons and intertwining of traditions. With that, they diminish the pragmatism of Turkish goals and thus are not in the position to use the advantages offered by the new multipolarity, that is, a completely new concept of multilateralism offered by Turkey. For now, that kind of approach is not harmful for the activities that Turkey has initiated in the Balkans. Furthermore, the historical bonds and tradition are used to nicely package the whole story for the local public in our countries. However, the new Turkish foreign policy is an intelligent policy and it demands an intelligent and not an emotional response. A response without exaggerated positive or negative emotions, without needless distancing or exceedingly fast approaching. As it is demonstrated through the examples of the countries in other regions, the specifics and interests of every country can be expressed. By using those interests, Turkey is now able to bring closer together the views of different sides through concrete initiatives and projects. The values that Turkey promotes through such efforts are essentially very European values; values of peace, tolerance and integration. Those are the values on which and for which the EU was established. Judging by the words of the minister Davutoglu, it is a conscious policy of Turkey – to demonstrate on the example of cooperation with the neighbors that Turkey is very much ready and capable to accept and promote European values. Here Turkey is slowly opening the space for itself to be what EU has been trying to do for years – not to be exclusively economic or military power, but also a 'normative power' which promotes values.

So, such understanding is the essence of what Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans can offer to Turkey on their behalf as a part of the 'new deal' – an opportunity for Turkey to prove that its final goal is the integration of Balkans and Turkey into the EU and NATO, and not a completely new orientation based on tradition and heritage. For now Turkey has the support of the USA in its efforts, which is manifested through a lack of open and strong opposition to the activities of Turkey in retailoring the relations in the Middle East. Specifically in the case of BiH's application for MAP, it was evident that the USA gave over the initiative to Turkey even though their representatives generally had a different opinion. Turkish approximation to Russia is also opening the doors for Balkans to the East, towards the investments, especially in the energy sector. So, the multidimensionality of new circumstances demands a multidimensional approach.

However, at the same time, it must be clear to all, that Turkey is not and does not wish to be an alternative to the EU or NATO, even as regards the relations with its first neighbors in the region. Unlike all of those mentioned above, Turkey has what the EU has been lacking in the Balkans for a while – a vision. And, which is even more important, a vision which is not in collision with what could or should be the vision of the European Union. The success of the Turkish initiatives in the Balkans so far shows that in the newly created multipolarity of the international relations, it is more important to have a vision than to have instruments. The lack of vision makes a real power impotent.

In the case of BiH, that vision can be successful only if it provides for baklava and Sacher cake to continue to coexist as they have been so far.