

TURKISH GEOPOLITICS AND ITS IMPACT ON WESTERN BALKANS

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Abstract

Geopolitics is crucial in analyzing the relations between states. However, its spectrum varies depending on the relations that Turkey has established. Also, geopolitics should be evaluated in a more holistic way, taking into account current developments such as globalization and the emergence of new actors in the international arena. This new scene conveys the message that these relations cannot be assessed separately. Therefore, based on geopolitical codes, Turkish foreign policy refers to, and the principles of these policies, as explained by strategist Ahmet Davutoglu, this paper aims to analyze in the geopolitical background, Turkey's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans. In recent years, Turkey has tried to change its course regarding its policies in the region. This has been proven in its opening simultaneously with many countries and its involvement in conflict resolution. Therefore, this new approach makes Turkey appear as a regional model and no longer a “generous” ally to the West. The actual Turkish policy toward Western Balkans, and especially Albania, is based on three plans: geo-politics, geo-economics and geo-culture. It explores Davotuglu’s strategic vision, and the extent to which this informs Turkish foreign policy, as well as its contradictions. Turkey’s involvement with the Western Balkans is associated with their geographical proximity. According to many analysts, any instability which ensues in the region has cultural, economic and political effects on Turkey. That is why promotion of peace and stability in the region is one of the priorities of the Turkish foreign policy. Economic ties are gradually becoming stronger and there is a significant increase in the cultural exchange through the active schools in the Gulen movement, increased popularity of soap operas and the level of tourism. Turkey has great interest in Albania as it is considered the best state to promote Turkish interests within the Western Balkan region. Though there are several obstacles limiting Turkey’s full penetration into the Western Balkans, the changes are increasing gradually.

Keywords: *strategic depth, strategic vision, geopolitics, geo-economy, soft power*