

Kinship and Diasporas in Turkish Foreign Policy:

Examples from Europe,
the Middle East and
Eastern Mediterranean

Mete Hatay
Zenonas Tziarras



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Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Hausmanns gate 7
PO Box 9229 Oslo
NO-0134 OSLO, Norway
Tel. +47 22 54 77 00
Fax +47 22 54 77 01
Email: info@prio.no
Web: www.prio.no



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CHAPTER 4:

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN THE ORBIT OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

David Henig

Introduction

On 2 September 2006, about 200 Bosnian Muslims gathered in the newly rebuilt Šudžaudinova mosque in the town of Rogatica located in the Republika Srpska. The mosque was built in 1576, destroyed in 1992 during the Bosnian war, and rebuilt thanks to the help of the city of Istanbul. During the opening ceremony the then grand mufti of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mustafa Cerić, addressed the audience in which a member of the Turkish government, the minister Ismet Yildirim, was also present. The grand mufti emphasised that Rogatica was one of the most important towns in the history of Bosnian-Turkish relations, as it was the greatest recruiting centre to the ranks of the Ottoman Empire. He then added, “I propose we all call ourselves Turks. And we are Turks — by our historical memory, by our historical disposition, by the identity of Islam that Turks brought to us. However, we are also Bosniaks.” Two years later, in 2008, during the visit to Sarajevo of the then prime minister of the leading AKP Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the grand mufti sparked a controversy when he said, “Please convey to your people the following: Turkey is our mother; it has been so and it will remain so.”

In 2018, after being banned from campaigning in EU countries, the now President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the AKP organised a large electoral rally in Sarajevo for the diasporic AKP supporters from across Europe. Thousands of AKP supporters flocked to the city. One of the participants in the rally, a Macedonian student of Turkish descent, for example, expressed his enthusiasm, saying, “Turkey is our mother nation,” and added, “We came to Sarajevo just for one day to support our saviour Erdogan.”¹ Bakir Izetbegović, the

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¹ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turks-flock-bosnia-see-erdogan-election-rally>

Bosniak (Muslim) chairman of the tripartite presidency at the time, encouraged all Turkish citizens living in Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth BiH) to vote for Erdogan, pleading that “the Turkish nation has a person sent by God. He is Recep Tayyip Erdogan”.² In response to the rally, the now emeritus grand mufti Mustafa Cerić commented around the same time “Erdogan can’t be our sultan; our sultan is seated in Brussels,” lamenting that the AKP-led Turkish parliament has never passed any sort of resolution about the Srebrenica genocide— unlike the European parliament.³ When I subsequently interviewed Bosnian Muslims of different walks of life about their perception of the rally, I received several characteristic responses. My interlocutors either commented, “it wasn’t as bad as the media reported,” or they expressed their outrage about what they described as “Erdoganisation” of Bosnian politics. Several other interlocutors suggested that, “it was more pragmatic than many people would be willing to acknowledge,” and added, “Erdogan just wanted to find a place as close to Vienna as possible. Nothing more, nothing less.” And finally, I interviewed several small hotel owners in Sarajevo, who welcomed the rally as it was a good business opportunity for the city. One of them put it clearly: “imagine more than 10,000 Turks from the EU with money. They need to sleep somewhere. They need to eat something. Even if they all ate just one portion of ćevapi, imagine, 10,000 times 7KM, that’s a good business.” What can be learned from these encounters?

Much attention has been paid in recent years to Turkey’s assertive geopolitical involvement across southeast Europe, and its diasporas in the EU (Öztürk and Sözeri 2018). It has been documented how the discourse on kin communities and shared Ottoman history is used as a legitimising framework for the expansive AKP-led foreign endeavours and the exercise of Turkey’s influence in the host countries (Wigen 2018). While Turkey’s activities in southeast Europe have been scrutinised, less attention has been paid to understanding the everyday diplomacy and geopolitics of such encounters (Jansen 2009; Marsden, Ibanez-Tirado and Henig 2016). This perspective focuses on how local actors and communities affected by such geopolitical processes articulate, respond to and negotiate them. Put differently, we need to ask what living in the orbit of Turkey’s policy entails for people of BiH.

As the above-mentioned examples indicate, Turkey’s involvement in BiH is primarily aimed at only one segment of the country, namely, the Bosniaks (Muslims) as one of the perceived kin communities (*Akraba Topluluklar*). In the Bosniak public discourse, the relationship with Turkey has often been understood through kinship terms as well. It was described variously as our mother, mother-orphan, older brother, family and family relations, or Islamic kinship, to name just a few (Merdjanova 2013: 80; Karčić 2010: 527; Henig 2012).

² <http://fp-reg.onecount.net/onecount/redirects/index.php?action=get-tokens&js=1&sid=&return=https%3A%2F%2Fforeignpolicy.com%2F2018%2F06%2F22%2Ferdogan-is-making-the-ottoman-empire-great-again%2F&sid=1mjsv1duoa0un75bok07h81a40>

³ <https://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/81824/mustafa-ef-ceric-poznaje...0-godina-i-on-ne-moze-biti-nas-sultan-nas-sultan-je-u-brisel-u.html>

The framing of BiH-Turkey relations in such a variety of kinship terms illustrates both the dynamic and simultaneously ambivalent character of BiH-Turkey relations, and of Turkish foreign policy in one of its so-called kin communities. More importantly, this ambivalence points to the ways in which the very same kin community — Bosnian Muslims in this case — responds. By tracing the local responses to and negotiations of such encounters, this chapter suggests that Turkey's discourse on kin communities and shared Ottoman history also brings into sharp relief a history of entanglements and frictions between BiH and Turkey. In so doing, it exposes not only its ambivalence but also its limitations. This chapter aims to understand the nature of these ambivalent relations and their arrangements between Turkey and BiH, while paying attention to Bosnian Muslims' feelings and perceptions about Turkey's foreign policies.

A central argument of this chapter contends that BiH responses to Turkey's foreign policy discourse centred on its historical kin communities need to be understood not as a top-down Turkey-BiH relationship, but rather as an on-going self/othering one. Drawing on Edin Hajdarpasic's (2015) ground-breaking work on the genealogies of national movements in Bosnia and the debates and contestations over 'Bosnian Muslim identity', I consider the relationship between BiH and Turkey as of two (*br*)others. As Hajdarpasic writes, Bosnian Muslims became perceived as co-nationals (of Serbs and Croats), but simultaneously not quite so. They were signifying "at the same time the potential of being both 'brother' and 'Other,' containing the fantasy of both complete assimilation and ominous, insurmountable difference" (2015: 16). The reference to (*br*)others, Hajdarpasic further argued, implies "a sense of shared ancestry, intimacy, and fellowship" among the members of the kin group. It is a kind of relationship that is somewhat self-evident and yet ambivalent. The figure of (*br*)other works in Hajdarpasic's writing as an analytical and interpretative device that enables him "to simultaneously hold two terms that usually have opposite meanings" (2015: 17). Although Hajdarpasic developed his analytical device for the context of imagined communities among the co-nationals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, its analytical purchase for the quasi-kin groupings with shared historical and cultural intimacies is obvious here, when the relations between BiH and Turkey are considered. Drawing on more than a decade of ethnographic fieldwork in BiH, this chapter will look at this (*br*)othering self/other dynamic from the Bosniak kin community's grassroots perspective, which is missing in much of the scholarship on this topic. It focuses on three key contentious areas of Turkey's foreign policy activities in BiH: economy, cultural heritage, and education.

Entering Turkey's orbit

Turkey's renewed geopolitical presence in southeast Europe was long in the making, having begun at the end of the Cold War (Anastasakis 2009). The violent disintegration of Yugoslavia and the ensuing war in BiH (1992-1995) further rekindled many of these interests. During the 1990s numerous actors from the Gulf countries were more active among the local Muslim communities on both humanitarian as well as religious grounds (Benthall and Bellion-Jordan 2003; Blumi 2002; Li 2019; Öktem 2010). Turkey did not take an active role until the

first decade of the 21st century when the AKP came to power and redefined Turkey's foreign policy and its role in southeast Europe (Öktem 2012). This coincided with the post 9/11 years during which the US-led pressure on BiH and other countries in the region to restrict the activities and money flows from the Gulf countries opened a new window of opportunities for Turkey, now represented by the pro-Islamic AKP as a relevant geopolitical force "protecting" its kin communities in southeast Europe (Merđjanova 2013: 77).

Since then, Turkey has exercised an increasingly assertive geopolitical role in the region. Yet, unlike in other countries in the region with kin communities, the scope of Turkey's influence in BiH has been limited, exercised mainly in the three areas that will be discussed in this chapter: economic investments, cultural heritage and education. As has been pointed out by many observers, Turkish foreign policy relies nowadays on rather "non-conventional foreign policy actors" (Öktem 2009; 2012: 32), namely, the Turkish Development Agency (TIKA), and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). The latter has played a major role since the 1990s "in providing religious services to the Muslim communities of the Balkans" (Öktem 2012: 42). As Öztürk and Gözaydin (2018) recently observed, in countries like Bulgaria, this includes training as well as sending imams, or running religious teaching and educational programmes locally, and even interfering in the appointments of muftis. The *Diyanet* is very active in the countries of the region such as Albania or Bulgaria, which experienced severe ruptures in religious organizations and practice during the communist era. However, this is not the case in BiH where Muslim religious affairs have been firmly under the control of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina for more than a century (Karčić, F. 2015). The Muslim community of BiH does not recognise the *Diyanet* as its supreme religious authority unlike in other countries across southeast Europe (Öktem 2009; Öztürk and Gözaydin 2018).

Economic diplomacy or the power of love?

One of the central components of Turkey's expanding influence over its kin communities abroad is through trade, investment and infrastructural development (Bryant and Hatay 2013). According to official statistics, Turkey's trade in the western Balkans alone rose from \$435 million in 2002 to \$3 billion in 2016.⁴ The kin affinity, however, does not always take precedent in Turkey's foreign trade activities. The majority of Turkey's trading relations in southeast Europe are carried out with the EU countries (Bulgaria and Croatia), and with Serbia. In the kin countries such as BiH it is often more the rhetoric than the deeds that unfolds on the ground. One of the main successes of Turkey's economic diplomacy in BiH is how effectively it managed to cultivate the *perception* of care, influence and aid. When the Deputy Secretary General of the AKP gave a speech in BiH in January 2018, and announced the AKP's plans in the country, he described BiH as "the future Anatolia of Europe" (Feyerabend 2018: 16).

⁴ <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-western-balkans-comeback-european-union-recep-tayyip-erdogan/>

The success of such rhetoric was documented recently in a survey, according to which more than one in three Bosniaks considers Turkey to be the largest investor in BiH. In fact, Turkey spends more money in neighbouring Serbia than among its (*br*)others in BiH. In 2017, the trade between Serbia and Turkey totaled \$1 billion with Erdogan's publicly announced aim to increase it to \$2 billion, while between BiH and Turkey it was only \$623 mil. The gap between the words and the deeds widens even more if we look at the breakdown of trade exchange. BiH's export to Turkey was significantly lower than the other way round (\$243 mil / \$368 mil respectively). As one former Bosnian diplomat expressed this trading gap, "Turkey gives Bosnia love, and Serbia investments."⁵

With protracted economic precarity in the country, and ever-increasing outmigration of young people primarily to the EU countries, this sentiment is increasingly felt in BiH. It articulates the othering rather than the affine relationships between the two countries. The ambivalence of the (*br*)otherhood was captured by one of my Bosnian interlocutors who described such a relationship with Turkey as, "they are brothers to us, but we are not brothers to them." Indeed, a number of online publications and newspaper articles appeared in the last year that critically discuss Turkey's underinvestment in BiH. In the period between 1994-2016, the total investment in BiH was €199.1 million, meaning that Turkey is only the 11th largest investor in BiH. The main investors remain EU countries. In 2017, Turkey's investment was even negative (-€6.6 mil). However, in May 2018 during his visit to Sarajevo, Erdogan pledged to invest €3.5 billion to build the 'Motorway of Peace' between Sarajevo and Belgrade. Erdogan further added that once the project is finalised, the entire region will benefit from it.⁶ In early June 2019, Erdogan invited Bakir Izetbegović to further talks about the motorway to Ankara. It remains to be seen whether this pledge will materialise given the deep economic recession in Turkey.

Several interlocutors suggested that the increasing media reporting on the lack of Turkey's investments in BiH, exposing the gap between the words and the deeds, is one way to intensify pressure on Turkey. The recent public debates in BiH suggested that while Turkey's foreign policy discourse towards BiH portrays it as the most important country in the Balkans, the only support it gives is political. Turkey supports territorial sovereignty and indivisibility of the post-Dayton BiH, and in particular strong ties between Turkey's AKP and pro-Bosniak SDA. But these ties are also a source of concern because they are seen within the intra-Bosniak political landscape as buttressing the authoritarian and socially conservative tendencies of SDA. If we zoom in and look at Turkey's economic activities, the kinship logic plays its role here as well. There is clearly a preference to invest in the Muslim-majority parts of the country, that is, in the Federation rather than in the Republika Srpska (Feyerabend 2018: 16).

⁵ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/22/erdogan-is-making-the-ottoman-empire-great-again/>

⁶ <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/erdogan-autoput-beograd-sarajevo-bice-put-mira/n41bzmm;>
<https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/region/erdogan-pozvao-izetbegovica-na-sastanak-u-istanbul-jedna-od-tema-ce-bit-autoput-sarajevo-beograd-2019-06-05>

The question increasingly asked by various actors across BiH is: how do BiH citizens benefit from Turkey's interests in the country? It is worth noting that the rising tide of critical reflections on Turkey's economic role also emerges from Bosniak circles, and cuts across all strata. For example, in response to Erdogan's visit to Sarajevo in 2018, the emeritus grand mufti Mustafa Cerić critically commented: "We have two direct flights between Istanbul-Sarajevo daily, but these are run by Turkish companies. And our airline company went bust. Why couldn't Turkey lease two 'Boeings', train our pilots and let BiH run this line?!" A similar critique is often heard among the wider public about Turkey's employing only Turkish workers on BiH construction projects, and even importing building material made in Turkey rather than allowing the local actors to partake, which could create jobs and profit locally. As one interlocutor commented to me, "Imagine if all the concrete that has been used for building mosques was used for building roads or factories."

It is important to note that the 'mosque versus factories' argument is not entirely new. The argument can be traced back to the socialist era, during which the Yugoslav state prioritised investments in industrial over religious infrastructure. The comment, however, points to the fact that it is not only the quantity but also the *quality* of these investments, and how this affects the local actors. While direct economic investment does not always materialise immediately, other forms of investment and aid have more visible and immediate effects, and contribute again to the rhetoric of Turkey being the major economic player in the country. These are various 'spectacular investments' aimed at infrastructural development (e.g., motorways, airports as in the case of Kosovo), and even more so on cultural heritage infrastructure from the Ottoman era, which again strengthens its public visibility and the kin rhetoric.

Reviving or saving cultural heritage?

One of the central tools of Turkey's foreign policy targeted at kin communities in southeast Europe is the revival of the Ottoman cultural heritage (Walton 2016). The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) is the major actor in such efforts. As Luke (2013:351) observed, "[o]ver the last decade, municipalities throughout the Balkans and Turkey have made concentrated efforts to revitalize historic sectors of villages, towns, and cities. The hope, for development agencies and government sectors funding the work, is that rehabilitated areas become spaces for contemporary, civic events." These attempts have been welcome as much as they have fostered discontent in the kin communities. A recent article in the *Guardian*, for example, describes the tensions that have arisen over Turkey's 'diplomatic gift' - building a new mosque in Pristina, Kosovo.⁷ Although the range of TIKA's activities is diverse, restoration of the Ottoman cultural heritage became the prime site of engagement in BiH, whereby the kin ties are being revitalised.

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/jan/02/turkey-is-kosovo-controversy-over-balkan-states-new-central-mosque>

To date approximately 850 TIKa projects have been realised since the Bosnian war (1992-1995). Education, health and farming are important areas of engagement, but the projects aimed at reviving the Ottoman cultural heritage dominate. In 2017, over 60 projects were realised and, once again, those targeted at cultural heritage dominated. Although TIKa employs the rhetoric of help to all the communities of BiH regardless of their religion and ethnic identification, it prioritises restoration of the Ottoman cultural-historical monuments. The material traces of the Ottoman past, however, were the prime targets of anti-Muslim attacks and destruction during the Bosnian war. Furthermore, whitewashing the Ottoman-cum-Islamic past has also been part of the ethno-national narratives across the region. This complicates the story of TIKa's inclusivity of all BiH communities because not all communities share the same vision of the past. Indeed, in a recent interview, the TIKa coordinator for BiH, Ömer Faruk Alimci, gave as an example of TIKa's activities the project of restoration of the Careva mosque in Foča that was set alight and its minaret detonated by the Serbian powers in April 1992.⁸

Along with restoration projects of the Ottoman heritage, the Turkish directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) has since the end of the Bosnian war invested in building four mosques in BiH. These are the Kajserija mosque in Goražde, a mosque in Tešanj, the Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka, and the now-under-construction Ahi Evran-i Veli Kirsehir mosque in Olovo (co-financed with the city of Kirsehir). As in the case of Olovo, there are many other individual projects aimed at shared cultural heritage that have been realised over the past two decades through the partnership between Turkish and Bosnian cities. Although these projects have been undertaken throughout the entire country, here again we can find a clear preference for targeting the local kin community (i.e., Bosniaks).

As much as the examples illustrate Turkey's use of soft power in its foreign policy, it is important to disentangle how these encounters unfold in regard to their cultural, religious, historical as well as political textures, and how local communities caught in such geopolitical processes articulate, respond to and negotiate them. In the previous section, we encountered an opinion that Turkey should invest in building factories and roads rather than mosques. During my interviews, I raised this opinion with numerous individuals of different walks of life and generations. My interlocutors agreed that it would, of course, be good to have more roads and factories. Yet they often immediately added, "but who would repair our mosques, all these buildings that need to be renovated? No one here would pay for it. There is no money." Comments such as this open another perspective on Turkey's activities in its kin communities: what is considered as exercising 'soft power' from Turkey's foreign policy point of view can become also an opportunity for the targeted community to exercise their own agency and turn these activities into their own opportunities. In BiH during the Yugoslav era, the Ottoman-era cultural heritage, including mosques, was neglected at best.

⁸ <https://www.trt.net.tr/hrvatski/region-2/2018/03/17/tika-do-danas-u-bih-realizirala-preko-850-projekata-931857>

During the ensuing Bosnian war (1992-1995), the same heritage as well as the mosques that were built in the post-Ottoman era were the prime target of destruction. The numbers make it plain: there were 1,144 mosques on the territory of BiH before the Bosnian war; more than 80% were damaged during the war. Furthermore, 614 mosques, 218 masjids, 69 mektebs, 4 tekkijas, 37 turbes, and 405 other waqf properties were destroyed. Hence, with the living legacies of conflict and targeted assault, such a *(br)otherly* embrace is a welcome opportunity for revitalisation of one's own community. This sentiment was echoed for example among the members of one cultural heritage association from central Bosnia who I interviewed on several occasions. While reflecting on the restoration activities of TIKA, one of their members told me: "it's the Ottoman heritage, but it's also Bosnian heritage. So one can be against Turks, one can even easily distinguish oneself [Bosniak] from the Ottomans and Turks, and yet it can't be taken away from Bosniaks, exactly because it's what represents Islam in this place." Thus, not only are the TIKA activities perceived as a tool for exercising Turkey's soft power (for a similar observation see Öktem 2012: 39). They also create a space for local actors to strengthen and articulate one's own interests, agendas and identities.

Education

Another equally important pillar of Turkey's cultural diplomacy and exercising soft power among its kin communities is education and cultural exchange. This dynamic unfolds in BiH along two major vectors: building educational infrastructure locally in the kin communities, and bringing its kin subjects to Turkey. Let us examine these vectors in turn.

There are currently several educational institutions in BiH entangled in Turkey's orbit of interests. The probably most well-known is the International University of Sarajevo (established in 2004). Although the International University of Sarajevo wasn't established directly by the Turkish government, the links are obvious. Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoglu have visited it on several occasions. The University also caused public outcry in May 2018, when it was reported that several foreign academics employed there had been made redundant after expressing their critical views on breaching human rights in Turkey, and for not showing up at the (mandatory) ceremony during which the university awarded an honorary doctorate to President Erdogan.⁹

There is also the International Burch University that was established in 2008 as part of *Bosna Sema* educational institutions, close to Fethullah Gülen's networks. Welcome at first, the activities of *Bosna Sema* came under considerable pressure after the failed coup d'état in 2016 in Turkey. The pressure from Turkey on local politicians and judicial institutions to shut down any Gülen-related educational institutions was widely discussed in the press. Numerous Bosniak politicians, in particular from SDA, but also intellectuals and representatives of the Islamic Community of BiH, publicly condemned Gülen networks after the failed coup, though

⁹ <https://www.dw.com/bs/turske-igre-u-bih/a-44710578>

many had earlier welcomed their activities. In both cases, the foreign countries, such as BiH, became a battleground for Turkey's domestic struggles.¹⁰ Yet the effects these frictions create are wider.

Indeed, Turkey's attack on the activities of Gülen-related networks in Turkey and abroad also created a space for critique and for articulating domestic tensions over religious authority in BiH. For example, it enabled the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina to place Gülen's teaching activities among the "new interpretations of Islam," which have proliferated in the country (Duranović and Ljevaković-Subašić 2018). This euphemism is increasingly deployed by the local religious establishment to lump together various and rather diverse actors (Li 2019), foreign and local, who represent and proselytize different interpretations of Islam and organization of Muslim lives, and who do not recognize the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina as their religious authority. However, when Turkey's government repeatedly requested extradition of seven Turkish citizens from BiH and accused them of being 'Gülen sympathisers' and assisting in the 2016 coup, a number of Bosnian intellectuals publicly protested, and reminded the Turkish government that BiH is no longer anyone's imperial province (*pashalik*).¹¹

The development aid aimed at the local educational infrastructure is another important aspect of Turkey's involvement in BiH, and TİKA again plays the major role. In recent years, for example, TİKA renovated and fully equipped the library of the Faculty of Architecture in Sarajevo. But numerous elementary and high schools were also renovated with TİKA's help. One of the school headmasters from a central Bosnian municipality showed me that he was able to renovate the roof and the heating system and to get a new IT lab through donations from TİKA as well as from one of the Istanbul boroughs with a significant number of the Bosniak refugee descendants (*muhaçir*). All these renovations, the headmaster suggested, would have hardly happened if the school relied on the state and cantonal help.

Another important group of educational activities is linked to the *Yunus Emre Institute*. Locally, the Institute runs numerous courses promoting Turkish culture (e.g., Turkish language, calligraphy), and cultural activities (lectures, exhibitions). But it also offers stipends to study in Turkey. This is quite an attractive opportunity for younger generations in the context of protracted economic precarity and the massive outmigration of the youth.¹² Here, the kinship discourse is explicit. The scholarship programme runs under the auspices of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (*Yürtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar*). The target group are those students and regions that the Turkish state sees as being 'Turkish'.

¹⁰ <https://www.dw.com/bs/gülenov-uticaj-na-bh-muslimane/a-19485193> [last accessed 7 May 2019]

¹¹ <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-erdoan-gulenovci/30049939.html>;
<https://vijesti.ba/clanak/455453/bih-nije-vise-pasaluk-u-kome-se-bespogovorno-izvrsavaju-naredbe-iz-stambola>

¹² Most recently: <https://www.dw.com/bs/zemlja-staraca-i-sirotinje/a-48606027?fbclid=IwAR3-xyNxtwvzu0vooMhy5Q2YASBheh-vr9thjoDBnsZZiMLwuKiCXC7OIeO> [last accessed 6 May, 2019]

This also determines the shape and composition of the trans-regional networks that are formed through these stipend-driven initiatives. One of my interlocutors listed among their dorm-mates young Bosniaks, along with Albanians, Macedonians, Pomaks, Kyrgyzs and Tatars. Although it would be easy to see these activities purely as a tool of soft power, the recipients of the stipends I interviewed also talked about receiving hope and being able to believe in their aspirations because of this opportunity to study abroad in a range of subjects, including social sciences, history, languages and engineering.¹³ But this does not mean that these activities wouldn't be perceived ambiguously.

The main issue raised by many of my interlocutors — now graduates of the universities in Turkey — was how difficult, or rather impossible, it has been to find a job in Turkey since graduation. Yet the lack of job opportunities in BiH was often mentioned as the main reason for going to Turkey. This was a cause for much frustration and disillusionment. Others, however, admitted that these stipends offered other forms of hope. Namely, since many universities in Turkey offer exchange programmes with universities in the EU, some of my interlocutors admitted that getting a stipend to study in Turkey is a way into the EU. Several of my interlocutors also considered the study option as an opportunity to revitalise their diasporic family networks in Turkey. They were referring to *muhaçir*—relatives who left decades ago and with whom their families in BiH maintained contact during the Cold War and post-Cold War years. The stipend thus enabled them not only to pursue their studies but also to spend more time with their relatives, mainly in Bursa and Istanbul. However, although the scholarships are perceived as an opportunity, the underlying kinship discourse is also perceived as very problematic and 'othering'. One of the recurring themes in the interviews was that my interlocutors felt rather uncomfortable about the *Akraba Topluluklar* categorisation. It reminded them of the war and the anti-Muslim rhetoric employed against Bosnian Muslims, when they were categorised as being Turks and not of Slavic background, and thus foreign to the Bosnian lands.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the ways in which Turkey's foreign policy aimed at its perceived kin communities unfolds in BiH. It suggested that the dynamics of the BiH-Turkey relations need to be attended to as an ongoing self/othering relationship in order to understand the effects of such foreign policies on the targeted kin community. The existing debates have focused primarily on Turkey's foreign policy endeavours, how these provide a lens on the reconfiguration of domestic policies and society and on the politics of identity in Turkey. The aim of this chapter has been to reorient the perspective, and trace instead how the local actors and communities articulate, respond to and negotiate Turkey's presence in various

¹³ Turkey did not figure in the interviews as a preferred choice for pursuing Islamic studies, unlike Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Malaysia.

domains of their lives. The chapter examined the dynamics of the BiH-Turkey relationships in three domains in particular: economy, cultural heritage, and education. While these are Turkey's strategic areas for exercising soft power abroad, the bottom-up findings presented here show how these activities also create frictions, foster critical reception, and often open a new field of opportunities that allow the local actors to pursue their own goals beyond the realm of kin community policies and Turkey's orbit of influence.

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