

This site uses cookies. By continuing to browse the site you are agreeing to our use of cookies. Review our [cookies in](#)

Turkey in the Balkans

The good old days?

Comm

E-mail

Talk of an Ottoman revival in the region seems exaggerated

Nov 5th 2011 | BELGRADE AND SARAJEVO | From the print edition

Like 203

Tweet 68



A shadow over an Ottoman domain

“SARAJEVO won today as much as Istanbul,” declared Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s prime minister, after his election victory in June. His comment excited new debate in the western Balkans about Turkey’s activist foreign policy. Are the Ottomans coming back? Several examples suggest not.

In Ankara on October 22nd, Muslim politicians from Bosnia and Sandzak in Serbia praised the Turks for mending a rift between Serbia’s two Islamic groups. The deal swiftly collapsed. The Turks were also praised in 2010 for reconciling Serbia with Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) politicians in Sarajevo. Yet relations between Bosniak, Serb and Croat politicians in Bosnia remain icy. A recent poll showed that views of Turkey in the region divide pretty clearly between Muslims (pro) and Christians (anti).

Turkey does better with soft power. Turkish soap operas have edged out Latin American

Recent A

Log In

Am 4,5

Stic 6,4

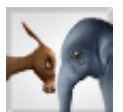
Dri 4,2

Sc 7,6

Facebo

Follow

Latest



The Econ
The Econom

ones in popularity. The Turks are busy restoring Ottoman monuments. Turkish schools and universities, some linked to the controversial Gulen movement, now educate several thousand pupils in Muslim regions. Petrit Selimi, Kosovo's deputy foreign minister, notes that in the past Turkey was seen as "more backward than us." Now, by contrast, it is a "modernising force."

The western Balkans matter little economically. High-profile road and airport projects give a false impression of huge Turkish investment. Except in Albania and Kosovo, there has been more talk than cash. Alida Vracic, an analyst in Sarajevo, says that when Bosniaks go to Istanbul there is a lot of "kiss, kiss" for Balkan cousins, but the money goes to Serbia. Even there Turkey is not among the top 20 foreign investors.

The Turkish foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, waxes lyrical about a "golden age" of the Balkans with Turkey. But Zarko Petrovic, a Serbian commentator, says the region's interest is largely emotional. Accession to the European Union remains the priority. And, as one Serbian official mutters, "we don't want to get too close to Turkey, because we don't want to be seen as part of an EU losers' club."

From the print edition: Europe

[Recommend](#) 65
 [Like](#) 203
 [Tweet](#) 68

[Share](#) 0

[View all comments \(60\)](#)

More from The Economist



Budget sequestration:
The meat cleaver we need



Sexual politics: More than half the electorate



Global alcohol consumption: Drinkin' habits

Prostitution: Sex doesn't sell

Portugal's woes: On the rocks

Next in Europe



In this section

Merkel and the minimum

Twenty times twenty

Rajoy the reformer

In at last?

Dormant power revival

The good old days?

A Greek bearing gifts

Papandreou's people

Reprints

Related topics

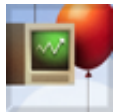
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sarajevo

The Balkans

Serbia

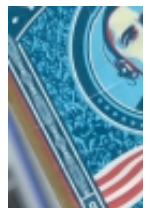
Government and politics



More fro

Most j

Recor



2 Poli

3 Rev

4 The
casl

5 Bud
need

Produ

Europe's zombie banks: Blight of the living dead

The Big Mac index: Value meal

See :
even

Drugs that cause most harm: Scoring drugs

Germany and Switzerland: A German history lesson in one Swiss building

Related items

TOPIC: Bosnia and Herzegovina »

War crimes in the former Yugoslavia: Two puzzling judgments in The Hague

Crime in the Balkans: Behind bars at last?

Aleksandar Hemon: Writing to survive

TOPIC: Sarajevo »

Gorazde: A microcosm of Bosnia

The 20th anniversary of the Bosnian war: Bosnia past, present and future

Bosnian politics: Let's stick together

TOPIC: The Balkans »

European economy guide: Taking Europe's pulse

Relations between Serbia and Kosovo: A deal at last?

Germany and the Balkans: The pivot in the Balkans' EU ambitions

TOPIC: Serbia »

Serbian diplomacy: Tear gas, Twitter and stubbed toes

Serbia, Kosovo and the Church: Physician, heal thyself

Serbia and Kosovo: Balkan breakthrough

More related topics: [Government and politics](#) | [Foreign policy](#) | [International relations](#)

Want more? Subscribe to *The Economist* and get the week's most relevant news and analysis.

**The
Economist**

Contact us

My account

Subscribe

Print edition

Digital editions

Sections

United States
Britain
Europe
China
Asia
Americas
Middle East & Africa
Business & Finance
Economics
Markets & Data
Science & Technology
Culture
Multimedia library

Debate and discussion

The Economist debates
What the world thinks
Letters to the editor
The Economist Quiz

Blogs

Americas view
Analects
Babbage
Banyan
Baobab
Blighty
Buttonwood's notebook
Charlemagne
Democracy in America
Eastern approaches
Erasmus
Feast and famine
Free exchange
Game theory
Graphic detail
Gulliver
Johnson
Lexington's notebook
Newsbook

Events

Jobs.Economist.com

Pomegranate
Prospero
Schumpeter
The Economist explains

[Contact us](#) [Help](#) [About us](#) [Advertise with us](#) [Editorial Staff](#) [Staff Books](#) [Careers](#) [Site index](#)

Copyright © The Economist Newspaper Limited 2013. All rights reserved. [Accessibility](#) [Privacy policy](#) [Cookies](#)