

Understanding new Turkey-Africa Relations: Rationale and Challenges

Mahamat K. Dodo¹

***Abstract:** In recent years, emerging powers such as China, India, Brazil, and Russia have dramatically increased their political, economic, and diplomatic relations with Africa. This phenomenon has led many Western analysts to affirm that emerging powers are competing to dislodge Africa's traditional partners; i.e., Western Europe and the United States, and pose serious challenges to their interests on the African continent. Each emerging power has its own interests by increasing its involvement in Africa just like the former colonial powers and the United States have so done for centuries. Thus, since the late nineties, Turkey has also joined the pack and increased its engagement in Africa. It is deepening its diplomatic relations with many African countries and the African Union, and developing a new market place for its companies and business community. Against this background, this article intends to give an overview of the Turkey's new Africa policy, discuss its main political, economic and security rationale and analyze its basic pillars and challenges.*

JEL Codes: O55, F15, N4, Q37

¹ Mahamat Kabirou Dodo is an Independent Researcher and Fellow at the International Academy of Social Science, and affiliate to the Center of Excellence at the Institute of European Studies University of California Berkeley and Centre de Documentació Europea, Universitat de Valencia, Spain

Keywords: *Africa, Turkey's Trade, International Relations, International Trade*

1. Introduction

The dismantlement of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the adoption of the free market economy by a sizeable number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the early to mid-nineties transformed their international relations. Emerging powers such as China, India, Brazil, and Russia became new actors on the continent and started to compete directly against the established powers such as France, United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, the emergence of the globalized economy after the end of the Cold War (1991) and Africa's growing population made it attractive to the emerging powers. Further, the advent of global terrorist activities and networks, organized crimes and transnational issues, and the migration of millions of Africans towards Europe also opened new areas of cooperation between African countries and the rest of the world. It is in this new post- Cold War world order that China, India, and Brazil established their political and economic relations with many sub-Saharan African countries. The adduced reason for the involvement of the above-cited actors in Africa is primarily to gain and secure access to Africa's natural resources, and at the same time create markets for their corporations. And from political perspective, securing those resources for their industrialization programs and internal political stability is another purported reason why those external powers have dramatically increased their political, economic and diplomatic relations with SSA in the last decade. Furthermore, the ever-increasing call for reforming the post-War Bretton Woods International Institutions (BWIs) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and the growing cooperation between the emerging powers and African countries in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO),

International Labor Organization (ILO), inter alia, are other drivers for Africa's new relationships with the rest of the world.

2. Historical Background of Turkey's Africa Relations

For centuries, Turkey's longstanding historic and cultural ties with North Africa is known and documented. This history can be traced back to the era of the Ottoman Empire and its involvement with what is today's largely Muslim populated North African region. However, as regards to the SSA, the Ottomans had a limited involvement with a few countries; this involvement was largely based on friendly relations and at times on defense and military alliances.² Thus, understanding Turkey's Africa relations today must be contextualized from these two historical tracks. On the one hand, the Ottoman Empire's historical links with the region of North Africa; and on the other hand, its sporadic if not in-existent engagement of Africa south of the Sahara. As such, the Ottoman Empire's history and later the history of the Republic of Turkey in Africa as a whole are divided into three periods: first, the period dating from the era of the Ottoman Empire to 1923; second, the period from the year 1923 to 1998; and finally from the year 1998 to present.

1.1. Turkey's Africa Relations 1500-1928

Turkey's presence in the region of North Africa dates back to the end of the 16th Century³. By the end of that century, most of the territories of today's North Africa were either under the control of the Ottoman

² See Mehmet OZKAN in "Turkey Discovers Africa: Implications and Prospects", SETA Policy Brief, SETA Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research, September 2008, No: 22

³ See Mehmet OZKAN in "Turkey Discovers Africa: Implications and Prospects", SETA Policy Brief, SETA Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research, September 2008, No: 22

Empire or had fallen under its cultural and religious influence. For example, in 1517, the city of Tlemcen, in today's Algeria, fell to the Ottoman corsair Oruç Barbarossa⁴. In the same year, Egypt was conquered by the Turkish army of Sultan Selim I and consequently, fell under the control of the Ottoman Empire⁵. In 1551, the Ottomans established their rule over the territory of today's Libya until Italy took over and occupied the country in the twentieth century⁶; and in 1574, Tunisia also became part of the Empire.

In contrast, the region of SSA never fell under the direct control of the Ottomans. However, they did develop friendly relations with a number of sub-Saharan African countries. They established relations with the Kanem Bornu Empire which represented part of today's territories of Northern Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, Niger and Chad⁷. The Empire also played an important role in derailing the colonial aspirations and occupying forces of European countries. In 1575, the Ottoman Empire signed a defense pact under the rule of Sultan Murat III with the Kanem Bornu and sent it military equipment and trainers⁸. Similarly, the Ottomans also helped prevent the penetration of colonial control of East Africa by European forces.

In today's South Africa, by 1861, the Ottomans had also diplomatic representations via the appointments of several Honorary Consuls in Cape Town. In addition, they also sent Imams to the Muslim Community

⁴ See the Fall of Tlemcen(1517) from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Tlemcen_%281517%29

⁵ See Egypt under the Caliphate & Ottoman Rule (646-circa 1800) available at <http://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/egypt02-08enl.html>

⁶ See Libya from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya>

⁷ See János Besenyó and Péter Oláh in "One of the New Competitors in Africa: Turkey", *National University of Public Service*, Budapest, Hungary

⁸ See Mehmet OZKAN, Turkey's Rising Role in Africa, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Volume 9 No 4, p. 96.

of the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) in 1863 via Honorary Consul General de Roubaix. As an appreciation, the Muslims of South Africa participated in the Hijaz Railway construction and contributed financially to the project. However, by the end of the 19th Century, the Empire could no longer maintain control over the above-mentioned countries because of the slow decadence and internal challenges.⁹

1.2. Turkey-Africa Relations 1923-1998

After the demise of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the country was no longer a power on the world stage. And with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923, with Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) as its first President, the new Republic did not have the resources and capability to project its powers beyond its own borders. Thus, from 1924 to the Second World War, the new regime was mainly committed to implementing internal reforms and engaging in the process of secularization of its society. By then, relations with Africa as a whole were therefore at its lowest point. At the same time, the majority of the African countries south of the Sahara and the Northern region alike, were also becoming colonies of the Western European countries; i.e., France, Spain, England, Portugal and Germany. As a result, throughout the decades of '30s, '40's and '50s, relations between Turkey and Africa were practically non-existent. One may also assume that, given these historical circumstances, SSA in Ankara was just not of interests to many Turkish policy-makers and Academia alike, and for many Turkish, Africa stopped at the northern region of the Continent. However, during the decolonization years of the '50s and early years of independence of many African countries, Ankara supported the liberation movements of many

⁹ For further detail on the Ottomans in Southern part of Africa, see Mehmet OZKAN, Turkey's Rising Role in Africa, Turkish Policy Quarterly, Volume 9 No 4, p. 96.

African countries and recognized the independence of the new States. It also opened diplomatic relations with countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan and Senegal in the early 1960s.

1.3. Turkey-Africa Relations 1998-Present

Turkey's new Africa policy, here understood as sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), started with the *Action plan for Africa* adopted by Ankara in 1998. In 2003, the Undersecretary for Foreign Trade formulated a *Strategy on the Development of the Economic Relations with African Countries*. And subsequently, the declaration of the year 2005 as the "Year of Africa" by the Administration of the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is to be considered as the beginning of Turkey's new focus on Africa. In the same year, (2005), the African Union (AU) accorded Turkey an *observer status*, and in January 2008, it declared it as a strategic partner of Africa. In addition, it also gained observer status in several Africa's sub-regional economic organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC) (in 2010), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2012. And on 18-21 August 2008, the first Africa-Turkey Cooperation Summit, dubbed *Solidarity and Partnership for a Common Future*, was held in Istanbul with the participation of 50 African countries, and in the presence of the President Abdullah Gül, UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, and the President of the Commission of the African Union Jean Ping. The Summit adopted two documents: the *Istanbul Declaration on Turkey-Africa Cooperation* and the *Framework of Cooperation for Turkish- African Partnership*. The Summit launched a sustainable and fruitful cooperation process between the African countries and the Republic of Turkey, and established a follow-up mechanism: a) *High Level Official Meeting* which was held 15 December 2010; and b) a *Ministerial Level Reviewing Conference* held on 16 December 2011 in Istanbul.

As a result of this new diplomatic drive by Ankara towards Africa, in 2009, it opened 20 new Embassies in Africa and by 2013 it has 39 Embassies across the Continent; and 30 resident African Embassies on its territory. Africa responded favorably to this diplomatic engagement by helping Turkey gain a non-permanent seat at the Security Council in 2011 with 51 votes. This deepening and strengthening of diplomatic relations between Ankara and Africa in the last decade was recently remarked by H.E. Mevlüt Çavusoglu, the Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs during his address at the Second Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit held on 10-21 November 2014, in Malabo, (Equatorial Guinea). In his address, he pointed-out that *“Turkey’s Africa policy gained a fresh momentum in 2013. 39 Turkish Embassies across the Continent and 30 Embassies of African countries in Ankara are at our disposal to fulfil our common goal of reaching a mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership. People to people contacts have gained strength as well. Hundreds of thousands of people are travelling annually between Turkey and the Continent. Today, thousands of people from Africa, study, work and live in Turkey and vice versa.”*

On a security level, Ankara has also increased its involvement in seeking resolutions to the Africans' conflicts. For example, on 21 March, 2010, it co-chaired with Egypt, an International Donor's Conference for the Reconstruction and Development of Darfur in Cairo. And subsequently, it twice hosted the Istanbul Somalia Conference organized within the UN Conference on 21-23 May 2010 and 31 May-1 June 2012. In addition, on 9-13 May 2011, it also hosted the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least-Developed Countries¹⁰ (LDCs) in

¹⁰ List of least-developed countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia,

Istanbul (34 out of 49 least-developed countries are in Africa), and offered to host the Mid-Term Review Conference of the Istanbul Program of Action in 2015. Furthermore, in recent years, Ankara has also strengthened its military cooperation agreements with Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and South Africa, and contributed to five recent UN peacekeeping missions in Africa by providing military and police personnel to the *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)*; the *United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)*; the *United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)*; the *United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)* ; and the *United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)*.

3. The Rationale of Turkey's Africa Relations

Turkey's new focus policy on Africa has been interpreted in many ways. Its multifaceted engagement in less than 10 years generates more questions than answers and brings some to question the drivers of its policy in Africa. This is because this multidimensional engagement varies from economic and diplomatic motives to cultural and religious renaissance. Thus, many international analysts and observers of Africa's international relations are asking the question of what is it for Ankara in Africa. Though, no one is accusing Ankara yet of planning to push the West out of Africa as China is constantly accused of doing, many observers want to know what is it that attracts Turkey to a continent that just 15 years ago the Economist degradedly called a

Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao, People's Dem. Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia

“Hopeless Continent”¹¹. So, what are the real interests of Turkey in Africa, and what is driving

Ankara to intensify its relations with parts of Africa that many of its policy-makers did not see

value in it for centuries? From our viewpoint, since the late '90s, geopolitical, external and internal interests have been the main drivers behind this new focus of Turkey's Africa relations. As mentioned-above, the international political and economic landscape of the post-Cold War created a new situation where global diplomacy and economic management were no longer solely controlled by the winners of the Second World War, i.e., the US and its Allies. The decade of the '90s saw the irruption of new actors (civil society, NGOs and INGOs) in international diplomatic relations and the emergence of industrializing powers such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Russia, South Korea, Malaysia, etc., in global political and economic governance.

3.1. Geopolitics and External Rationale

The 9/11 attacks and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq in 2003, and the Bush Administration policy to democratize North Africa and the Greater Middle-East, ushered a new day in the international diplomacy. The Global War on Terrorism and the efforts to bring peace in Afghanistan and Somalia, and the engagement of the International Community to address poverty and economic challenges in Africa brought new actors to Africa's shores. It is in this context that Turkey launched its new Africa's policy.

In addition, the publication of the Report of the Commission for Africa in March 2005 also brought to the attention of the world the plight

¹¹ See the Economist Print edition May 13th, 2000, “The hopeless continent”

of Africa and the challenges that it was facing to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals¹² and create a sustainable economic development policy for its peoples. The report also showed the remarkable changes that were

taking place in Africa in terms of vision and institutional transformations. For example, the former Organization for African Unity (OAU) was transformed into the African Union (AU) (2003); and the creation of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)¹³ was established as a policy initiative by the African leaders and conceived as an institution of continental scope to address the socio-economic challenges of 21st Century Africa. The message from the said leaders was clear: Africans wanted to take their destiny into their own hands and wanted Africa's solution to the Africa's problems. The world took notice and the international community responded by engaging Africa on that note. It is in this context that Ankara put its Africa policy to a new gear and made the year 2005 as "the year of Africa".

Furthermore, The emergence of China and the BRICs as a counterweight to the Unipolar world led by the US after the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of the South-South trade and economic relations, also made Ankara take note of the changes that were taking place in the post-Cold War world. In addition, the 2007-2008 financial and economic crises and the low growth of many European economies, and the sustainable economic growth that many African countries have experienced in the last decade, also did not go unnoticed to both the Turkish private sector and Ankara's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹² The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. See WIKIPEDIA in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium_Development_Goals

¹³ NEPAD is a "vision and strategic framework for Africa's renewal", see <http://www.au.int/en/NEPAD>

3.2. Socio-Economic Reforms and Internal Rationale

Internal political and economic situations at the outset of the new millennium (2000-2003) called for social, political and economic transformations within Turkey itself. The advent of Justice and Development Party (known as AKP) in 2002 with the Erdogan Administration, and the restructuring of the economy and clear orientation in its external relations, also gave Ankara a new focus and direction in its international relations. Between the year 2002 and 2012, one can say that Turkey was transformed on all level and the country has left behind it the years of economic crises, social unrest and countless failed and attempted coup d'états. In addition, Ankara's never ending negotiations for its bid to become a member of the European Union (EU) and its commitment to implement reforms in order to meet the Copenhagen Criteria¹⁴ made it also realize that developing strong diplomatic relations with Africa and other developing countries for that matter, could also further its strategic interests in this globalized world. African countries are very much present in multilateral diplomacy and generally vote *en masse* in the international organizations. Ankara understood that this is a political capital in multilateral diplomacy that can be of a value to it, and that developing good relations with Africa may further its interests in the new international political arena.

In addition, Ankara's engagement in multilateral bodies and its hosting of several UN framework conferences on transnational issues also put its foreign policy in sync with issues of greater importance to developing countries and Africa in particular. This not only gave it

¹⁴ The Copenhagen Criteria are accession criteria for EU membership. They are conditions that a candidate country for EU membership has to meet. For further details, see Europa portal available at http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm

exposure and prestige but also helped it develop personal diplomacy with the African leadership that it barely knew or was familiar with at the turn of the new Century. Moreover, the reality of the new globalized marketplace and the growth of the Turkish economy itself, coupled with its participation into the global economic governance forums such as the G20, and its leadership in many international organizations, such as the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), spurred it to work in tandem with its corporations in order to search for new markets and advance its foreign economic interests.

3.3. Turkey's Soft Policy in Africa

Turkey's soft policy in Africa is a combination of aid, humanitarian policy, trade and economic relations, institutional and diplomatic relations, cultural and religious overtures. This multifaceted engagement towards Africa needs to be understood in individual policy context. That is to say, from the perspectives of cultural and religious ties with North Africa and the Muslim Communities in many African countries, to the humanitarian aid and development assistance, to the provision of assistance in disaster relief, health, education, and agricultural projects. In addition, Ankara's hosting of UN and other International Organizations framework conferences that are of interest to many African countries also play part in its soft policy engagement with Africa. In fact, hosting those international conferences help cement Ankara's relations with regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa and propel its positive image across Africa. For, those regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa are the institutions through which many policy-initiatives and orientations are channeled throughout the Continent. Furthermore, Ankara's organizing Trade Summits and meetings of its businesspeople with their African counterparts are also a central element of its soft policy instruments with Africa's business community.

4. Turkey's Actors in Africa's Policy

It is true that the year 2005 was declared as the “Year of Africa” by the government of Erdogan, and it is also true that the current new focus of Ankara’s policy towards Africa was institutionalized by the adoption of the 1998 “Opening to Africa Policy” and the First Africa-Turkey Summit and its subsequent political and economic developments. However, it is worth noting that there are other actors that have also contributed, albeit with the support and encouragement of Ankara, to the development of these new Turkey-Africa Relations. Those actors are, in order of importance or equal order, the following: the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey, known as TUSCON, an umbrella organization for 7 regional federations, 162 business associations which count with more than 30.000 entrepreneurs and business people as members. This organization is primarily Ankara’s corporate voice in international affairs. It represents the private sector interests and organizes meetings among Turkish businesspeople and entrepreneurs with their counterparts in Africa. For instance, it is responsible for having organized thus far more than 9 “Foreign Trade Bridges” between the Turkish business community and Africa’s entrepreneurs and business interests. The first foreign trade bridge program that it organized took place in Istanbul on May 8-9, 2006, and brought about 500 business people from 35 different countries, and 1,000 businesspeople from Turkey.

As a result of that program, 40,000 bilateral meetings¹⁵ were held between Turkish business

people and African participants. In addition, as a follow-up to Trade Bridge Programs, TUSKON also organizes trade and investment delegation trips to viable African countries. Those trips are usually led by the President of Turkey or other important cabinet figures. In addition,

¹⁵ See Mustafa Gunay Turkey-Africa Relations, Chatham House, 14 April 2011

TUSKON member federations also have been engaged in organizing trade and investment delegations to Africa.¹⁶

Second, the Civil Society, represented by the Turkish NGOs such as *Insan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı* (the Foundation of Humanitarian Aid for Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

(IHH)), among many others, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), an official and cooperation agency, and the Presidency for Religious Affairs, known as *Diyanet*, is another actor that is playing a primordial role in strengthening Turkey-Africa relations. The IHH for instance, is operating in 42 African countries and playing an important role in Turkish humanitarian aid by carrying-out wells-drilling projects in Somalia, Cameroon, Kenya and Ethiopia, setting up schools, hospitals, and attending thousands of Africans patients with its Cataract Projects in Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Togo, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, and Benin.

Third, *Diyanet* is also another actor in Turkey-Africa relations. It, among many other Turkish religious organizations, has been conducting cultural and religious diplomacy with the tacit encouragement and support of Ankara. This is another dimension of Ankara's multidimensional engagement towards Africa. Strangely enough, though Religion is not part of Turkey's foreign policy (at least from official perspective), it is however, a facet of Ankara's foreign policy in

Africa.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Ankara's Africa policy is not just with the

countries where Muslims are majority, it is also with African countries such as the Central African Republic where Muslims are

¹⁶ See Mustafa Gunay, CHATHAM HOUSE Transcript Turkey-Africa Relations

¹⁷ See Mehmet Ozkan in Turkey's religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa; and Turkey in Africa: Where Economic Diplomacy Meets Islamic Appeal in ASC Infosheet 24 available at www.Ascleiden.nl

minority or Angola where native Muslim population is almost inconsequential.

Fourth, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), which was founded in 1992, and set up its first Africa liaison offices in 2005 in Addis Ababa, in 2006 in Dakar, and in 2007 in Khartoum. This agency has been opening new offices and engaging in many development assistance related projects throughout Africa. In 2011, it opened new offices in Mogadishu and Tripoli and in 2012 in Nairobi, Cairo and Tunisia. Currently, it has expanded its operations in more than 30 African countries and has eleven regional offices. Its projects are mostly related to education, water and sanitation, agricultural development, and support for local institutions for capacity building and technical assistance. In short, according to Mustafa Sahin, the purposes of TIKA's projects and activities are to foment long term social and economic infrastructure of Africa.¹⁸

5. Trade and Economic Dimension of Turkey- Africa Relations

Turkey's trade volume with SSA and total trade volume with all Africa have risen considerably in the last 15 years. In 2005 for instance, Turkish exports to Africa were only 3.6 billion USD. Out of this, its exports to SSA were 1.1. Billion, and in 2010 it has reached 2.3 billion USD and by 2014 it has attained 3.4 billion USD. That is, Turkish exports to SSA as a destination has tripled in the last 10 years. On the other side, Turkish imports from Africa were slightly above 3.2 billion USD in 2005. Out of this, in 2005, its imports from SSA were of value of

¹⁸ See Mustafa Sahin, "Development Aid in African countries and TIKA" in *Common Strategic Vision Development Project Diplomatic Representatives of Turkey and African Countries, 3rd Workshop Final Report "Development Aid in African Countries and Turkish Civil Society Organizations"*, Oguzhan Kose (ed), Istanbul, TASAM Yayinhari, Strategic Report No: 22, December 2007, p.27.

1.6 billion USD, and 1.7 billion USD in 2010 and by 2014, the value has reached 2.5 billion USD. Thus, in the last decade, Turkish imports from SSA have practically doubled. And overall, in the last decade, the total trade volume of Turkey with SSA has increased tenfold. In 2014, its bilateral trade volume with all Africa has reached 20 billion USD. And according to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mevlüt Çavusoglu, during his address to the Second Turkey-Africa Summit while in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, 'the joint aim of bilateral trade relations between Turkey and Africa is to reach the target of 50 billion Dollars by the year 2018'. Nonetheless, it is worth reminding that Africa as a whole is still not yet a big export market for Turkey. For example, as of 2014, North Africa and SSA combined roughly represent 9% of Turkey's exports, while the EU, Near and Middle Eastern countries and other Asian countries, make up more than 70% of its exports (see table 1). As regards to its overall imports as well, the figures show the same trends. Africa as a whole makes up only 2 to 3% of Turkey's imports while more than 2/3 of its imports come from the EU, Near and Middle Eastern Countries and other Asian Countries (see table 2). Therefore, though the economic relations and trade volume between Turkey and SSA have grown substantially in the last Decade when compared to what it was in the '90s, in many cases, African countries record trade deficit vis-à-vis Ankara. (See figures 1, 2, & 3 on pages 22, 23, and 24 at the end of the article and table 1 on page 23 and table 2 on page 24 as well)

6. What Can Africa Gain from this Relationship?

Turkey's new focus policy in Africa is barely 15 years old. Africa's new relationships with the rest of the world are multilateral in nature. This is so with the established partners as well as the new actors such as China, India, Brazil, Russia, and Turkey as well. Against this backdrop, it is therefore, too early to say or make a firm statement on the advantages that this new Turkey's policy in Africa can bring to the Continent. Nevertheless, given the multifaceted engagement and multidimensional policy instruments that Ankara has deployed towards Africa since declaring the year 2005 as the "Year of

Africa”, one can say that Africa could gain a lot from this new actor. Thus, as for now, the following are what Africa can gain from its new relations with Ankara (considering that more area of interests will be developing while bilateral relations will be growing and consolidating in the years to come):

- 1) An enthusiastic partner who wants to have a balanced relationship and a win-win partnership with Africa. Turkey has the advantage of not carrying a colonial baggage and at the same time carries a history of cultural and religious ties with the Northern region of the Continent. Though it is true that other actors such as China, India, Russia, and Brazil do not also carry with them a history of colonialism with Africa, Ankara’s history of cultural and religious ties is a plus, especially with North Africa and some East African countries where identity is a big element of interstate relations.
- 2) A voice in an area of the World where Africa is still not understood and known and viewed with lots of prejudices and negative press due to a distorted view of the Continent. That is, taking into consideration all the usual negative stuff that the world audience sees in its living rooms through its television sets on Africa. That is, reports after reports on Africa about wars, famine, backwardness, internal conflicts, collapsed, failed or disintegrating States and an exodus of desperate young Africans trying to reach the European shores with all the consequences that that ensue. All these negative information are reported to millions of foreign audiences without a slight attempt (save some exceptions) to analyze why those recurring negative events take place year after year in a Continent that is supposedly one of the richest in the world. Hence, Ankara could help to write a new narrative of positive image of Africa in its neighborhood.
- 3) Ankara is also offering to be a voice for Africa in multilateral settings. On several occasions, it has said and declared that it is willing to address issues of primary importance for Africa in International Organizations such as the G20, UN, etc. This goodwill policy on international scene is

priceless in a world where positive or negative images are transmitted instantly.

- 4) Ankara could also be a model for transfer technology for many African countries. It is a mid- size economy that has transformed itself and is the 16th largest economy today. Its manufacturing base and know-how could be beneficial to many small businesses in Africa and African countries that aspire to industrialize. Its agricultural technology and savvy may also be very helpful to Africa now that the issue of food security and self-reliance is gaining importance with the Africa's political leadership. As a testimony of that, the AU declared the year 2014 as the year of agriculture and food security, and in its *Agenda 2063*¹⁹, it emphasizes 'self-reliance and the changing nature of Africa's relationships with the rest of the world' as the way forward for Africa's future.
- 5) Ankara could also be helpful in assisting African countries where issues of religion are creating conflicts among communities and coexistence among religious communities in many African countries are becoming untenable, and in certain cases non-existent. Recent case of the Central African Republic civil conflict and its religious dimension is a case in point.

7. What Can Turkey Gain from this Relationship?

Turkey's multifaceted engagement with Africa could bring it lots of benefits if it manages its relations with Africa as a whole in a comprehensive and transparent way. Its approach to the important issues of Africa and collaboration with its regional and sub-regional organizations could distinguish it from other actors operating on the Continent. In addition, Ankara could also add value to its foreign and economic interests in Africa by betting seriously on the following points:

¹⁹ See Agenda 2063 "A global strategy to optimize use of Africa's resources for the benefits of all Africans", in <http://agenda2063.au.int/en/vision>

1) Africa as a whole is a growing market with more than 1.1 billion people today and expected to increase to 2.4 billion by 2050.²⁰ This is a huge consumer and future labor market in the making. Africa's young and growing population aspires to be part of the globalized market and is willing to work to acquire what the world of the 21st Century offers.

2) Africa's drive to industrialize and participate fully into the globalized world economy could be a boon for Turkish international companies. Africa could be a test market for some of them that want to compete on a global scale. China is already using this strategy as part of its overseas investment policy.²¹ Turkish companies could develop strategic alliances with thousands of small and medium parastatal companies in Africa. They could also enter into alliances with some of the European and American companies already established on the Continent. Regarding this point, some Turkish officials have publicly declared that they will have no problem cooperating with Europeans, Americans and even Chinese in Africa. This is a good comprehensive approach that could be beneficial for both Africa and Turkey so long as Africans also participate in the venture.

3) Ankara shall be able to enhance its value-addition in its foreign and economic policy in Africa by making countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan and South Africa, as 'regional point countries' for its regional and continental strategy. Doing so will give it lots of visibility in the capitals of the

²⁰ See World Population Data Sheet 2013, Regional Highlights Africa, in <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2013/2013-world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx>

²¹ See Chinese national companies' investment: going global for energy, International Energy Agency (IEA), in <http://www.iea.org/ieaenergy/issue7/chinese-national-oil-companies-investments-going-global-for-energy.html>

above-mentioned countries and add to its soft policy approach to the regions. In addition, Ankara's social capital could be enhanced in many African capitals and within the general population if it was perceived to engage Africans on an equal footing and as partners.

- 4) From the beginning of this new focus policy of Turkey in Africa (2005), Ankara has shown interests in making Agriculture an area of interests and investment. Africa has a tremendous potential in developing large scale industrial agriculture that could feed and secure food for its peoples, and at the same time export it to a growing world population. Africa has 60 percent of the world's arable land and Ankara could benefit tremendously by expanding its investment in that sector for long term benefits. Though it is true that economic gains are a central element of Ankara's policy towards Africa, its multifaceted engagement is an approach that could be mutually beneficial to both partners if well managed.

8. Challenges

Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa and its multidimensional engagement to it ought to be understood in the context of the growing global economic changes and shifts in the international economic relations. It is clear that its ambitions and motivations in engaging Africa, coupled with its optimism about the prospects of the future of the Continent, are an asset that definitely furthers its political, economic and cultural connections with Africa. Ankara's reminding of its historic and cultural ties with Africa, and at times the utterance of policy statements against the colonial past of "others", and the religious dimension of its engagement with some African countries ought to be well defined. Not doing so could lead to a misinterpretation of its policies with other competing and established actors in the Continent. In addition, another challenge that may lie ahead in Ankara's Africa policy may be found in NATO's policy. As a member of NATO, Turkey's is obliged to go along with the policy of the organization. For example, many African countries were against the intervention of NATO in 2011 in Libya even though they proved incapable to stop it. That is, this is a situation that if it were

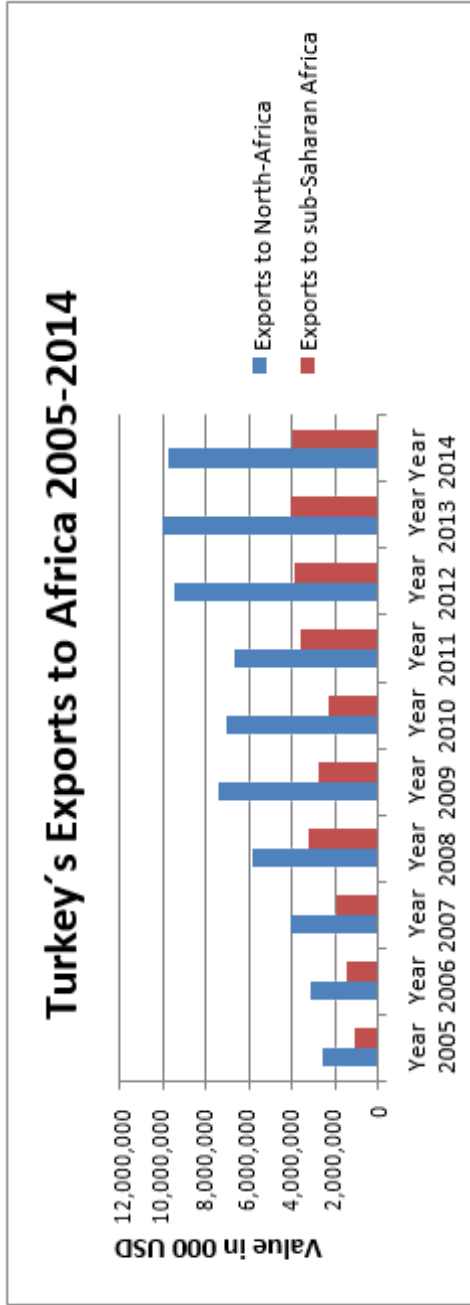
to be repeated, Turkey would have a bit of an explanation to give to its African interlocutors. Furthermore, internal politics between Ankara and its main trade promoter abroad, i.e., TUSKON, may also adversely and inadvertently affect the trade and economic relations between it and many African countries. For instance, the recent and ongoing political spat between the Erdogan Administration and the faith-based Gülen movement and its supporters has strained the relationship between the government and TUSKON. This is so because TUSKON is known to have ties with the movement and the government is accusing its sympathizers of trying to foment a coup against it. Consequently, this is a challenge that could affect the future bilateral relations between Ankara and Africa given that trade and economics are the pillars of its political and diplomatic relations in the Continent. And TUSKON is a big part of that. As a case in point, the HIZMET MOVEMENT NEWS PORTAL online of March 10, 2015, recently ran an article on this issue titled “Government Oppression of Confederation Hurts Turkish Exports to Africa”. To further make this point, TUSKON President Rizanur Meral says “the government’s wielding of its power, however, has contributed even more to the losses stemming from falling export volumes with Africa”, and he went on to add that “when the businesspeople who became regular customers of Turkey after many years of diligent effort fail to receive a [Turkish] visa, they go to Dubai, China and even to Europe. Turkey turns those to whom it avoids giving a visa into customers of other countries,” Hence, this is a challenge that may lie ahead if Turkey’s Africa policy does not enjoy the kind of cohesiveness and partnership shown so far between Ankara and its private sector and civil society.

9. Conclusion: How Different is Turkey from other Actors in Africa?

Turkey as any other emerging and growing mid-size economy and regional actor understands that the world as conceived after the Second World War has profoundly changed. This change was manifested after the end of the Cold War and has become very visible to the whole world after the horrendous terrorist attack of the September the 11th, 2001, in the United States. As such, Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa is a reflection of this new world order, and it is driven by a long-term view of where Turkey wants to be in this globalized world. As a mid-size economy and aspiring to be a visible regional power, Africa offers it a platform to project and protect its interests on the world stage. Therefore, despite all the soft policy instruments that Ankara uses in its new focus policy towards Africa, hard trade and economic interests and power politics are what seem to be driving it to diversify its political and economic alliances. With that said, African leaders and countries should simply understand that despite all the good intentions of Ankara and its policy-makers, it is in Africa for its own interests just as like any other emerging and established world actor. It is not engaging Africa for a pure altruistic reason. It has its strategic and economic reasons and Africa today offers a market and diplomatic space for emerging powers and a mid-size economy to project their growing diplomatic and economic clout. Therefore, understanding this without equivocation by the African political and economic leadership could help consolidate Turkey- Africa Relations and make the Partnership durable, transparent, and mutually beneficial for all. For, Turkey is a mid-size economy and Ankara wants to open and secure markets for its businesses and also be recognized as an important regional actor within the new multipolar world. At the same time, it could also provide Africa with voices in several international organizations and assist it in areas of interests that could be of mutual benefits. Therefore, where Ankara may differ in its engagement in Africa, say from China or India or the Europeans and Americans for that matter, could be in its approach and areas of interests and priorities, and legitimized Century old-cultural and religious ties to the Continent. It has defined agriculture; social and economic infrastructure, academic and cultural exchanges as areas of interests and

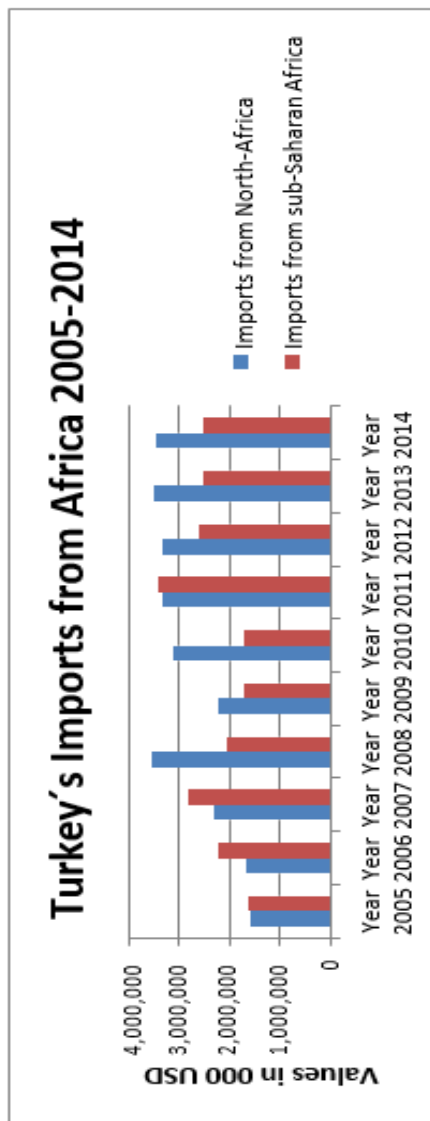
priorities, and is not shy about projecting a positive image of Africa to its citizens and seizing the opportunity that the post-Cold War world offers it. This in essence, makes it different than the other actors operating in Africa so far, at least from its rhetoric and policy declarations in the last 10 years. In sum, years to come will tell if it is different than the other international actors that have dealt with Africa or are currently engaging it.

Figure 1.



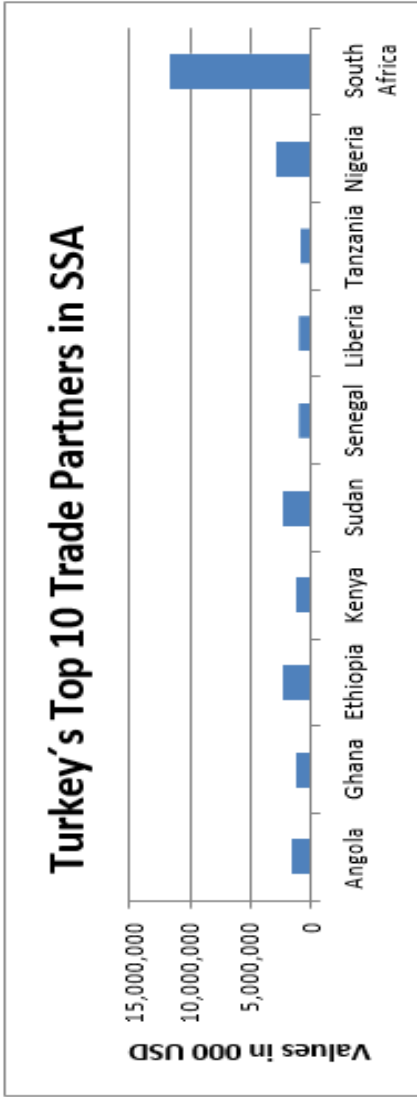
Source: Turkish Statistics Institute

Figure 2.



Source: Turkish Statistics Institute

Figure 3



Source: Turkish Statistics Institute

Understanding new Turkey-Africa Relations: Rationale and Challenges

Table1. Turkey's Exports to Country Groups and Year (\$ Thousand)

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | |
| North-Africa | 2544398 | 3096665 | 4029683 | 5850262 | 7415776 | 7025168 | 6700805 | 9443604 | 10041750 | 9757906 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 1 086 849 | 1 469 127 | 1 946 661 | 3 212 341 | 2 738 866 | 2 257 898 | 3633016 | 3913246 | 4103794 | 3997239 |
| EU (28) | 41532953 | 48148628 | 60754022 | 63719097 | 47228119 | 52934452 | 62589257 | 59398377 | 63039810 | 68529094 |
| North American Countries | 5275698 | 5439399 | 4540601 | 4801535 | 3578829 | 4242435 | 5459299 | 6662554 | 6580293 | 7295189 |
| Near and Middle East | 10184230 | 11315751 | 15081322 | 25430395 | 19192808 | 23294873 | 27934772 | 42451153 | 55574660 | 35390974 |
| Other Asian Countries | 3028878 | 3941556 | 5227250 | 7074123 | 6705544 | 8580833 | 10199361 | 10574649 | 12016838 | 11595291 |

Source: Turkish Statistics Institute

Table 2. Turkey's Imports from Country Groups and Year (\$ Thousand)

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | |
| North Africa | 1584201 | 1676694 | 2285434 | 3535990 | 2237693 | 3098091 | 3342055 | 3308343 | 3508479 | 3440883 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 1632270 | 2233388 | 2821104 | 2060486 | 1700198 | 1725916 | 3424658 | 2613447 | 2522630 | 2502192 |
| EU (28) | 52781362 | 59447587 | 68472309 | 74513444 | 56616302 | 72391053 | 91439406 | 87656462 | 92457992 | 88783685 |
| North America | 5822698 | 6935690 | 9032926 | 13404016 | 9513149 | 13234069 | 17345670 | 15084268 | 13952865 | 13834979 |
| Near and Middle-East | 6066417 | 8640862 | 10148760 | 13145164 | 7133985 | 13010825 | 20439413 | 21410008 | 22214051 | 20480505 |
| Other Asian Countries | 20581162 | 25657979 | 33658278 | 37616399 | 28748748 | 40343434 | 53143945 | 49602022 | 54648319 | 56162363 |

Source: Turkish Statistics Institute

10. References

- Adekeye Adebajo, Adekeye (2010) *The Curse of Berlin Africa After the Cold War*. London: Hurst and Company.
- Berstein, Serge, and Pierre Milza (1987) *Histoire du Vingtième Siècle 1.1900-1939 Un monde déstabilisé*. Paris: Hatier.
- Cooper, Robert. (2003-2004) *The Breaking of Nations Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Muldoon Jr., James P., Aviel, Joan Fagot, Richard Reitano and Earl Sullivan (1999) *Multilateral Diplomacy and the United Nations Today*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bilgic, A. and Daniela Nascimento (2014) *Turkey's new focus on Africa: causes and challenges*. Oslo, Norway: NOREF NORWEGIAN PEACEBUILDING RESOURCE CENTRE. Policy Brief September 2014.
- OZKAN, M. (2010) *Turkey's rising role in Africa*. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9 (4): 93-105.
- OZKAN, M. (2013) *Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa: Emerging Powers in Africa*. London, UK: London School of Economics. LSE IDEAS Special Report no. 016: 45- 50.
- Vicky, A. (2011) *Turkey moves into Africa*, *Le Monde Diplomatique English Edition LMD*, <http://mondediplo.com/2011/05/08turkey>, accessed 15 March, 2015.
- Gunay, M. (2011) *Turkey-Africa Relations*. Speech to Chatham House. London, 11 April.
- Çavuşoğlu, M. (2014) *Ministerial Meeting of the Second Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit*. Malabo, 20 November
- OZKAN, M. (2008) *Turkey Discovers Africa: Implications and Prospects*. Washington, D.C., USA: SETA Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research. SETA Policy Brief no. 22.

János Besenyó and Péter Oláh (2012) One of the new competitors in Africa: Turkey. AARMS vol. 11, no. 1 135-148.

Report Commission for Africa (2005) OUR COMMON INTEREST REPORT OF THE COMMISSION FOR AFRICA available at: http://www.commissionforafrica.info/wp-content/uploads/2005-report/11-03-05_cr_report.pdf.