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## Main Dynamics of Turkish-African Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### Abstract

This paper is focused on an overview of Turkey's increased engagement towards Africa, especially in terms of its potentials, future perspectives and limits of the relations. It portrays and examines the main essence of Turkey's foreign policy in Africa, and equally analyses the main reason or aspects behind the relations with Africa within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It tries to answer the questions of why Turkey has so much interest in Africa now. In other words, it explores more the economic interaction (diplomacy) that fosters the relations between Turkey and Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It equally shows the economic aspects as key instrument in building relations between Turkey and Africa. This continent known as Africa in the 90s was never a concern to Turkey as it is in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, since Turkey paid more attention to its relations with the West, and its close neighbors like Middle East, Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It discusses some of the main political, economic, religious, cultural and strategic motivations behind Turkey's interest in Africa, as well as some of the challenges face along the line in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper consists of three main sections. The first section presents the relations between Turkey and Africa during Ottoman Empire, Turkish foreign policy toward Africa in Cold War period. It also gives an overview of Turkey's relations with Africa, Turkey's policy in Africa and the main elements shaping relations between Turkey and Africa. Then, the various approaches, mainly economic diplomacy approach in maintaining relations between Turkey and Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are presented. Turkey's increasing use of soft power strategies drive a great desire to tie both the economy of Turkey and Africa more closely. From the aforementioned, Turkey's soft power content ranges from professional and cultural exchange, agriculture, and humanitarian assistance.

**Keywords:** Africa, development, economic diplomacy, economic partnership, soft power, trade and economic cooperation agreement, Turkey, Turkey's Africa foreign policy.

### 1. Introduction

Studies on Turkey and Africa have traditionally been centered on economic relations. Turkey might not have created relations with all African countries, but the idea of its relations remains general in most studies. Economic relations play a vital role in a state success and it is one of the strategic elements for the development of a country's economy. Countries like France, China, United States of America (USA), and United Kingdom (UK), just to name a few have been creating strong

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affiliations with African countries especially in the area of socio-economic and political relations. Turkey is not an exception to join the race of creating strong relations with Africa. The content of this article is vital, because it explains a brief account of Turkey-Africa relations during and after the Ottoman Empire and detailed account of same relations during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Turkey's relation with Africa is based more on a free-market economy system where concrete roles are implemented. Turkey lays more concern on structural reforms in economy, social security, agriculture, energy and communication privatization process and public finance has been put to order to strengthen Turkey's foreign policy with world at large. Turkey is progressively improving its foreign trade with Africa, and opening more doors on tourism. Extending to all African countries will obviously lay more concrete relations between Turkey and the entire African continent.

## **2. Turkey-Africa Relations Before and During the Ottoman Empire**

Turkey's relations with Africa is a long-standing historical and cultural relations that started centuries ago. According to the official website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on "Turkey-Africa relations"; Tulunids, which is known today as Egypt was one of the founding states by the Turks in the continent of Africa since the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is important to know that colonial expansion in North Africa was prevented by the Ottoman Empire, likewise with East Africa. A clear example in line to this is seen in the 16<sup>th</sup> century where the Ottoman Navy under the commandship of Admiral Seydi Ali Reis stood as a defender of the Zanzibar Island against the forces that were trying to occupy the island.

Another relation created by the Turks was with the kingdom of Timbuktu, which in our present date is call Mali. Also, another relation was the (Kanem Empire,) so occupant territories of present date North Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and North Cameroon. Relations with the North and Northeast of Africa are always a thoughtful and exclusive area in the memories of Turkish people. Turkey in its relations with Africa did not consider it as one. They did not give equal regards to the Northern part of Africa with the Sub-Saharan part of Africa. More of its interest was geared toward North Africa. Turkey had strong relations with some North African countries such as Libya, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia, and it is likely due to the fact that these countries were part of the Ottoman State since the period of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. Turkey's relations with North Africa was due to some common interest between the two. Both sides had similar religious backgrounds as Muslims, also because both Turkey and North Africa countries were all in the Middle East. This is one of the reasons why Turkey did not have so much interest to Africa until the 21<sup>st</sup> century where it became so renowned and top priority on its objectives to create relations across the boher. Turkey's interest in creating relations with Sub-Saharan Africa started in 19<sup>th</sup> century . This is one of the reasons why Turkey did not have time for the Sub-Saharan Africa. They had lot of negative ideas about this part of Africa. As more of Muslims, they thought that it was better being close to the North of Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa was perceived by Turkish to be a far off destination, covered with a lot of negative barriers such as diseases, hunger, famine, and civil war. These mentalities perceived by Turkish people were a huge hindrance of creating relations with that part of the continent. Thanks to the efforts of a ruling party "AK Party-Justice and Development Party, Turkish government, and civil society organization, the negative image of Sub-Saharan Africa began to change. An example of breaking this negative image was the visit of the then Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Ethiopia and South Africa in 2005. Most people including the media, and retired diplomats criticized this visit. Turkey-Africa relations can be divided into three eras. The first era starts during the Ottoman Empire relations with Africa till the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The relation during this period was just considerable. The second era starts from 1923 to 1998, where the relation was at the lowest level. The third era was from 1998, with the acceptance of the African Action Plan. Turkey's interest in Africa revived, thus reaching a higher peak in 2005. Today, the negative conception about Africa has transformed into a win-win partnership and many agreements. Moreover, Africa is seen today as a ground full of human resources, economic, and cultural opportunities.

Turkey's historical relations with Africa can be well understood by looking at the African continent from a geographical perspective. North Africa was once the main focus point in Turkish foreign policy because of similar religious and historical background that existed between them. Turkey in this present century is circulated in both north and Sub-Saharan Africa today. It is of

interest to know that Turkey's growing interest for African was strongly influence by media coverage, and in the academic arena with high increase of research centers, courses at the universities, scientific journals, conferences, all focused on Africa. Even though Turkey had a strong interest on the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Middle East, but this interest was later reversed toward Africa. Acting as a new donor country with greater ambitions, Turkey's political and economic relations with Sub-Saharan African countries intensified greatly.

According to Kieran E. Uchuera (2008, p. 51) in an article titled "Continuity and Change in Turkish Foreign Policy Toward Africa", Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia, and Algeria were historically provinces of the Ottoman Empire until when it was cut off and share to France, Italy and United Kingdom. Ottomans developed closed relations with some African regions because of the presence of the Muslims population living there and also because rich diamond and gold were discovered in the areas. According to the speculations by some scholars, the Ottoman Empire expansion during the period of 14<sup>th</sup> century had indirect contributions to the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and southern region of Africa. A lot of strenuous efforts has been put in place by Turkey (Ottoman Empire in the previous years) to renew her old relations with the Sub-Saharan African and other parts of Africa. Cultural and social relations between Turkey and Africa predate since during the period of the Ottoman Empire till the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

### **3. Turkish Foreign Policy Toward Africa During the Cold War**

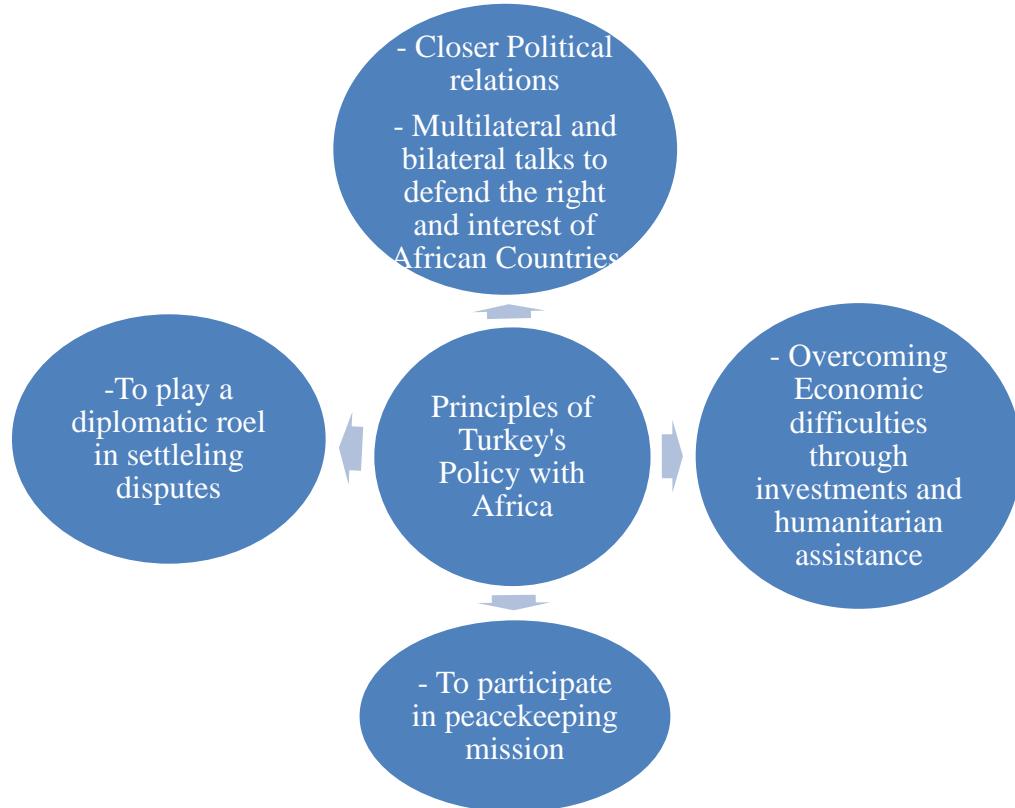
Turkish-Africa relations within the 90s were of a very low importance/value if it existed at all. The young Republic of Turkey's foreign policy attitude was shaped by the Kemalist tradition in which more emphases on the policy was centered on non-intervention, vigilance to national sovereignty, and a western orientation. Turkey with its policy on and before the Second World War (WWII) had always been very skeptical in being part of any conflict, and rather preferred to be neutral in its foreign affairs so as to protect its territorial integrity. Turkey started developing a lot of interest towards Africa during the Cold War period, and was attaching more importance with the Northern part of Africa. This growth of relations was based mostly on economic and political terms. However, the conditions of the Cold War bipolarity shaped these relations, thus embracing the odd historical public sentiment toward the entire continent. Turkey had great recognition of Africa, but lacked the proper means and strategy on how to go about it.

According to Özkan (2010, p. 95), Turkey's relation with Africa was downgraded to the lowest level after the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923. This, according to Özkan, was as a result of the domestic problems both sides were facing, such as putting in place a new state structure etc. It is of great importance to understand that Turkey's relations with Africa especially North Africa has been stronger thanks to its enormous efforts to diversify its economic and political relations. Sub-Saharan African countries were of no special importance in Turkish foreign policy agenda during this period. By 1970s, conflict in Cyprus was a hindrance regarding the relations with its Western allies. Turkey missed the opportunity to develop firm and healthy commercial, political, and economic relations with Africa during the unveiling of the decolonization process in Africa. In a nutshell, the lack of interest, and the strategy to use in creating strong relations with Africa was one of the problems in Turkey's agenda. Özkan (2010, p. 95) goes further to give us an understanding that it was still in the 1990s that Turkey opened up to Africa based on the Africa Action Plan in 1998. This opening to Africa through the help of AK Party government was seriously taken into consideration and very much supported by different civil society organizations in Turkey.

### **4. Principles of Turkey's Policy in Africa**

Turkey-Africa relation is an important orientation of Turkish foreign policy. Being a strong Afro-Eurasian state, Turkey's interest in Africa is not just on transient social, political, religion and economic expectations. Rather, it is a product whereby a strong historical and cultural aspect upholds. According to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the relations between Turkey and Africa, some important principles of its policy with Africa are stated as follows: 1) to establish a closed political relations through re-enforcement of bilateral high visit to the continent of Africa, and to stand as an actor in defending the legitimate rights and interest of the various African states through multilateral and bilateral talks. 2) to stand as a supportive actor in overcoming Africa's economic hardship by investing in Africa, offer humanitarian services, and trade in Africa and with

Africans. 3) to exercise diplomatic techniques in peaceful settlement of dispute in Africa. 4) to actively participate in peacekeeping missions within the continent.



**Fig. 1.** Principles of Turkey's Policy with Africa

**Source:** Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), "Turkey-Africa Relations", <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>

The opening of Turkey to the continent of Africa shows that an increase in trade, humanitarian aids, bilateral official visits, educational activities and a concrete visibility in international organization gives a strong support in an "all in one" perspective of Turkey's foreign policy. The dynamism of Turkish entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has so much accelerated positively.

#### A win-win policy

In other to strengthen Turkey-Africa relations, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkish President made official visits to some African countries. According to Mucahid Durmaz in TRT World reports on "Turkey seeks deeper relations with Africa", Erdogan's visits have been considered by Turkish officials as a 'win-win' trip to Africa (27 May 2016). Turkish President recently paid two official visits to Uganda and Kenya. Several scholars question why Erdogan decided to visit Uganda and Kenya now. The answers to these questions are that; Kenya for example is the economic giant of East Africa. Its capital city Nairobi is a hub that hosts the headquarters of many international companies and organizations. It equally plays an important political and strategic role in East Africa. President Uhuru Kenyatta's visit to Turkey in 2014 was his very first visit to Europe as President. After his visit, trade between Turkey and Kenya reached 150 million \$ in 2015. According to TRT World (27 May 2016), about 400 Kenyan students are studying in Turkish universities under scholarship. This shows a clear indication that relations with Africa is not only about business, but also about other sectors.

On the other hand, he happens to be the first Turkish president to visit Uganda. Uganda has a lot of opportunities for Turkish investment in sectors like agriculture, mining, and tourism. Ömer Cihat Vardan, Chairman of Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK-Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu) in accompanying the president in his trip said DEIK will set up business forums in Kenya and Uganda to enhance contacts between Turkish businessmen and the two countries. He, during

the set tour equally said Turkey's main aim in Africa is more of 'building bridges on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation'. In support to this, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs said that Turkey is pursuing 'a human-oriented approach' toward Africa rather than exploitation or colonialist one. A total of 5437 students from Africa countries are studying in Turkish institutes of higher education under Turkish government scholarships. In line to this, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said in an official message during the African Day (25 May 2016) that 'Turkey stands with African brothers and sisters' (TRT World, 25 May 2016).

In line to this, he added that Turkey sees Africa as a reliable partner. He also added that "we did our best to develop relations with African countries. Turkey's Africa policy has been transformed into a partnership policy. We opened embassies in 39 African countries. Turkish Airlines flies to 38 destinations in the continent on Africa. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA-Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı) done a lot in supporting developmental projects, and have opened 14 offices in the African continent". Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Turkey and his counterpart Louise Mushikiwabo from Rwanda signed a memorandum of understanding on educational cooperation, visa exemptions for diplomatic passports and more cooperation between the two countries' foreign ministries. Mushikiwabo on this note remarked that "in the last five to seven years there were many developments in the field of trade and investment between Turkey and Rwanda. There are numerous opportunities for the Turkish business community in Rwanda". The Minister requested for more benefits from many possibilities of Turkey's education, health and engineering in Rwanda. In a nutshell, a Turkey-Africa relation is that of a win-win one.

#### Main elements shaping relations between Turkey & Africa

##### Socio-political relations

Turkey-Africa political relations became so strong after 2005, when it was proclaimed as the "Year of Africa" by Turkish government. In the same year the proclamation, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who was the then Prime Minister of Turkey paid an official visit to some African States like Ethiopia and South Africa. Turkey also became an "Observatory Status" in the African Union (AU), and was also declared by AU as a "Strategic Partner" during the 2008 Turkey-Africa Summit.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit that took place in Malabo, the Capital of Equatorial Guinea from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2014 marked one of the contributing factors that showed the existing collaboration that was going on between Turkey and the continent of Africa. Being an Observer and a strategic partner of AU shows Turkey has been doing a lot to tighten its relations with Africa. In regards to the official website of TABA (Turkish-African Business Association) on Turkish African Business Relations, a total of 16 countries took part as active participants of the summit, while in general view, there were 30 African countries represented in the Malabo Summit. It showed that seven African presidents were present (Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Mauritania, Benin, Zimbabwe, Niger and Democratic Republic of Congo), and eleven Ministers from; Kenya, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Angola, Sudan, Ethiopia, Libya, Ghana, Morocco and Somalia. The Chairman of the African Union Commission was present during the summit. This encouraging representation from African diplomats shows the concern they had in strengthening relations with Turkey. A clear support to this statement can be seen from the chosen theme of the Summit which states "A new model of partnership for the strengthening of sustainable development and integration". An adoption of declaration and join implementation plan for the period of 2015 to 2019 was one of the key aspects during the conference, and this was because of the interest of relations from both sides, and how to meet more often to discuss on how to strengthen their relations. Decisions of the Summit called for a third Turkey-Africa Partnership summit agreed to take place in Turkey in 2019.

The importance of Turkey-Africa political relations can also be seen within the activities in the United Nations (UN). For instance, in 2008, Turkey was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, with votes from 151 countries. This was possible thanks to the massive support of African countries that voted "*en bloc*" in favor of Turkey, though with the exception of South Africa and Mozambique (Katerina, 2010). Moreover, Turkey is seeking the leadership role in world politics by establishing strong relations with African states. In exchange to this, most African countries expect Turkey to stand by them to articulate their problems and interest at the UN forum.

Turkey adopted a system of creating close and firm political relations with Africa so as to intensify a positive bilateral high level of formal visits to Africa. Also, Turkey was to act at the same time as the voice of Africa to defend the rights and interest of African countries. It is however important that Turkey has of now been engaged in five UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. These missions are; UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), the hybrid AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and UN Mission in Cote D'Ivoire (ONUCI). Turkey was equally part of the United States-led Combined Task Force (CTF) 151, a multinational naval force carrying out anti-piracy operations under the mandate of UN Security Council, off the coast of Somalia since 2009. In 2012, Turkey assumed command of this task force (Pham, 2010; Combined Maritime Forces, 2012). Turkey took some political measures to concretize their relations with Africa in the following ways; (i) to organize high-level visits to most African countries, (ii) to establish a healthy political consultation mechanism, (iii) to apply quality intensification of contacts with countries in Africa within international organizations, (iv) to have a healthy reciprocal inter-parliamentary visits, (v) to have visits of Turkish delegations and diplomats to various African countries, and (vi) to contribute to the various UN technical and humanitarian assistance programs.

Turkey attaches a lot of importance to ensuring stability and peace in the African continent. According to analyses from Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey has of now given a lot of contribution through the United Nations in peacekeeping missions in Africa. Turkey has embarked on providing financial and personnel support to seven out of nine peacekeeping missions in Africa, that is; MINUSM/Mali, MONUSCO/DRC, UNMISS/South Sudan, MINUSCA/CAR, UNAMID/Darfur, UNOCI/Cote D'Ivoire, and UNMIL/Liberia. Additionally, Turkish National Police have been proving training to its counterparts personnel in African countries in various fields. Military support is not left out. Turkey also usually provides training to African military personnel.

#### Conceptual views of Turkey-Africa economic relations

Economic relations with Africa started since during the period of the Ottoman Empire and it provided an exclusive structure to speed up the acceleration of mutual trade relations and economic partnership between Africa and the Modern Turkey. Enwere and Yilmaz (2014, pp.216-230) argue that some strength in Africa economic system was emerged by the Ottomans and in 1518, and the Ottomans controlled the lands of Egypt before strategically extending its economic tentacles right inside the interior of the entire Africa. Egypt was strategically and economically so vital to the Ottomans due to its fertile lands, large population, and trade relations into Europe, Middle East and Africa. Also, the provision of sublime port was a source for the Ottomans to have absolute control over the East Mediterranean and the Nile Valley.

The Ottoman economic relations with Egypt through proactive trade strategy pave a way to economic growth in other parts of Africa most particularly in Sub-Saharan and North African countries. In North Africa, trade relations was with states such as; Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Ottomans economic strategic trade role was with countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti etc. (Shinn, 2015). Northern Sub-Saharan Africa was not left out of the list. The Ottomans maintained a good economic relations and alliance with a renowned empire called Kanem Bornu Empire which is today known as Niger, Northern Nigeria and Chad. They were a sort of trade by batter practiced by both trading blocs whereby, the Kanem Bomu imported military equipment from the Ottoman Empire, while solid minerals were exported as exchange in return. According to Hazar (2000, p. 110), he argues that great economic benefits were offered to both trading blocs as a result of the operations of an economic system by the Ottoman trade relations with Africa. The economic relations between the Ottomans and Africa is said to have taken a strategy of an economic community which was characterized by freedom of movement for both the goods, and the goods and the citizens. Traders had a lot of benefits through exploitation from the Ottoman monopoly of land routes. In line to this, Hazar (2000, p. 110) argues that goods such as silk and gold were imported to African countries from the East and Europe, while animal skins and gold were exported from Africa as well. The opening of the first mosque in Lagos in 1894 pushed the Ottomans to send emissary to Lagos. This did not just widen but the religious affiliations, but it also opened a way for a more collaborative economic and trade relations in today's Nigeria.

According to Enwere and Yilmaz (2014, pp. 216-230), the economic hegemony and trade of the Ottoman Empire influence in Africa began disintegrating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was replaced in a tactical way with the European trade values and models. It is impressive to know that Egypt adopted a capitalist ideals, technology and values in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which led to the tremendous improvement in the productivity in Africa. The Ottoman economic hegemony in Africa collapsed during the First World War (WWI), resulting to the emerged of their former provinces of Africa as modern states, under the European role thus becoming "The Peripheral States of Western Capitalist Powers". Many scholars in their research have argued that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire let to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 (Enwere and Yilmaz, pp. 216-230). This argument goes further that the emergence of Modern Turkey drastically reduced the economic relation between Turkey and Africa as a result of a strategically wiped off of the Ottoman economic legacy in Africa by the Western values of colonialism and capitalism. This however let to the loss of sight between Turkey and Africa.

Despite the loss of sight in the economic relations between Turkey and Africa, it was later renewed strategically during the period of Cold War. Greater economic importance evolved again by the Turks towards Africa, and this gave birth to the establishment of both diplomatic and economic relations with all the newly independent states of Africa which were recognized by Turkey after the decolonization process in Africa around the late 1950s and 1960s. In line to this, Akçay (2012, p. 89) argues that considering Turkey's efforts to strengthen its economic relations, Turgut Özal became the first Turkish Prime Minister to grant foreign aid to Africa in 1985 after decades of economic interactions. This became a new platform of economic partnership with the modern state of Africa. This helped to wipe off the negative ideas shown by some Turkish economic observers who believed that economic partnership with Africa was a waste of time, resources, and energy. The economic strategy of Turgut Özal, economic relations and trade with Africa drastically increased "in a geometric proportion and with the declaration of 2005 as the year of Africa". This also let to the adoption of the African Action Plan in 1998, which was aimed at opening up Turkey's economy to Africa, and to portray a united and positive image of Africa in Turkey.

Looking at the economic relations of Turkey with Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Turkey has sustained a social and economic development with an incredible high growth rate of about 6-7% per year since 2002. With this outcome, it is seen as one of the highest OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). It is argued that the high growth rates, together with other foreign investments have led to the rise of small and medium sized entrepreneurs of Anatolia. Anatolia is often termed as Anatolia Tigers. This however has boosted the leverage of Turkey's economic and social transformation. Due to the crisis in the European Union (EU) in 2009 as great trade partners of Turkey, the Anatolian Tigers were subjected to strengthen new markets efforts in the Middle East and Africa. Economic organizations such as The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB-Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği) and Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD-Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği) play a great rule as small and medium size entrepreneurs of Turkey in leading Turkey's organizations in its foreign policy initiatives. In order to strengthen Turkish foreign policy, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs has put certain procedures to widen up the missions and work definitions of Turkish diplomats abroad. These procedures started with economic objectives such as; opening up of new markets, easing the flow of credit investment, building good ideas for trade agreements and to encourage Turkey's investment to their countries of operation. Priorities toward trade and economic relations have been part of Turkey's objectives, and guideline to Turkish ambassadors. The ambassadors also have the authority to act as general directors of Turkish companies, so as to effectively strengthen Turkish investment strategies abroad.

Turkey's role in African economic organization is so vital. As earlier mentioned, the continent of Africa is full of resources, and stands in a better position for many countries to develop trade relations with. Turkey's economic relation with Africa is fast evolving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A good example to notice the evolvement is the gesture where in 2005; Turkey became the 26<sup>th</sup> non-regional member of the African Development Bank (Pham, 2010, p. 11). Since then, Turkey embarked on various infrastructure projects in Africa, finance by this Bank. Additionally, Turkey's aim in supporting Africa in economic sphere is to try to see on how to solve its problems and difficulties through trade transactions, humanitarian assistance and investment. Moreover, Turkey entered into a free trade agreement with some communities in east Africa, which are custom union

to countries like; Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania and Rwanda by 2019 (Katerina, 2010, p. 11). Turkey became a member of the International Authority on Development (IGAD) partner forum since 2008.

This organization is the Eastern African regional political and economic organization. In 2005, Turkish Embassy in Abuja-Nigeria was accredited to the Western African political and economic government organization known as "Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)". Additionally, since 2010, Turkish Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania was accredited to the East African Community (EAC) (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). Turkey in its strive to sustaining bilateral relations came up with a strategy which was based on having concrete agreements of trade, economic, technical and scientific cooperation, prevention of double taxation, and mutual promotion and protection of investment so as to have a legal framework of trade relations. Turkey also made sure of inviting some African officials like ministers of trade, industry, health, education and agriculture, so as to have a good cooperation network, and to intensify its relations. The contributions of civil society in exchange of visit by businessmen, and the creation of a joint business council or chambers of commerce economically strengthen the relations between Turkey and Africa.

Turkey aims to be listed among the top ten economies of the world by 2023. In other to achieve this 2023 goal, Turkey is expected to work harder in promoting its investment and trade strategies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Being ignorant on the markets found in these areas to maintain trade and investment may lead Turkey to be unsuccessful on their target of 2023. In line to the 2023 vision, another argument came up by Yalın Alpay (2016, p. 47). He argues that for Turkey to really excel economically, it must respect the vision of 2023. To him, Turkey's foreign trade with the continent of Africa should be at least "150 billion \$ by 2023". If Turkey doesn't go up to this amount, it will mean that Turkey did not use its opportunities judiciously. Also, he suggests that Turkey's export to Africa by this same expectation year of 2023 should at least be "87 billion \$".

#### Turkey's soft power approach towards Africa

Turkey's zeal or interest on Africa can be seen to be an intensive attempt to revitalize partnership or relation in many ways. The opening up to Africa remains a big challenge and a very important aspect for Turkey as this will determine the success or failure of its policy. Since during the designation of 2005 as the "Year of Africa", and the "adoption of the African Action Plan in 1998", Turkey has given more preference in expanding and giving greater profile to its soft power Policy. In line to this, firstly, Turkey created an open door for financial aid to some African Countries through its cooperation agency, international agencies, and through Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA-Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı). Secondly, Turkey's policy of announcing 2005 as the Year of Africa, boosting of Turkey-Africa Summit in Istanbul in 2008, creating a total of 8 new embassies in Africa in 2009 giving a total of 20, is a process of soft power strategy to maintaining its relations. The aforementioned equally became the birth idea for Turkish officials and business men to tighten trade relations between the two parties and also economic development. Turkey's soft power approach can be seen in some major areas as follows; humanitarian aid, and trade relations.

#### Trade and Institutional Partnership

Turkey with its trade partnership and bilateral agreement has remarkable features through its soft power resources which were aimed at influencing the outcomes of policies in Africa and trade negotiations as well. According to Akgün and Özkan (2010, pp. 525-546), Turkey's increased its soft power policy by 2008, and became a great partner with Africa Union and the Economic Community of West African States. It also strengthened its relations with African Development bank and Intergovernmental Authority on Development in East Africa. Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) in Turkey played an important role in fostering Turkey's power trade relations. It established business councils in some African countries like; Algeria, Morocco, Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Sudan to boom trade activities in Africa.

Katerina (2000, p. 109-110), argues that a tremendous increase in Turkey's total trade volume in Africa was 5.4 billion \$ in 2003, to over 17 billion \$ realized in 2013. This increase of trade volume became a point of attraction to other Economic players like France. France in 2010 proclaimed its interest with Turkey for a joint trade mission in Africa, so as to suppress China's trade influence in that continent (Özkan and Akgün, 2010, pp. 525-546). France perceived that

Turkey was a good ally to challenge the spread of Chinese-led investment, infrastructural projects, and close collaborative links and impression of China in the mind of Africans.

Trade relations between Turkey and Africa became desirable to most African countries especially in the field of construction, drilling and agriculture. These trade relations between Turkey and Africa aims to utilize and produce Turkey's agricultural technology and expertise in Africa. Enwere and Yilmaz (2014, pp. 226-227) view that Turkey's soft power approach in creating relations with Africa is not centered on the manipulation of free market just as neo-liberal policy is always strive at getting the best trade deals and pay-offs at all possible means. This system is at the destructive detriment of the African economy. Rather, Turkey's soft power policy is more concentrated on trying to develop a two side initiative where both parties benefits, and to see how a change of African economy can be met.

According to Ali Bilgiç and Daniela Nascimento (2014, p. 2) in their article titled "Turkey's new Focus on Africa: Causes and Challenges", put forth some arguments on the economic dimensions of the relations between Turkey and Africa under two Categories; Trade Relations and Development Aid. They argue that both Turkey and Africa benefits from increase trade and development cooperation, because it is a source of creating more employment and investments. Looking at the context of trade, they argue that progress can be observed from trade relations with Africa especially between 2000 and 2008. Trade statistics shows that in the year 2000, Turkey's trade with Sub-Saharan African countries was amounted 741 million \$, and by the year 2008, it drastically increased to 5.7 billion \$. The 2012 figures shows that while steel and iron products were considered to represent the maximum share of Turkey's exports to Sub-Saharan Africa, which worth the sum of about 1 billion \$). Items like pearls, jewelry and valuable stones were the common imports from Africa to Turkey (worth about 813 Million \$) (Turkish Ministry of Economy, 2013). As a result of high booming of economies in many African States, Turkey extended its relations strategy by equally investing in communications via Turkish Airlines, which flew to about 38 destinations and 23 countries in the Sub-Saharan African countries.

Turkey has 26 Commercial Consulates in the capitals of some African countries in line with the increase in diplomatic presence. In addition to this, Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) established a business with a total of 19 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Turkey signed lots of economic and trade agreements. For instance, it signed agreements with 38 different Africa countries, so as to sustain a contractual basis for mutual economic relations between both sides. According to Joe Hammoura (2016, p. 4) it is estimated that Turkey had a bilateral trade volume of about 17.5 billion \$ in 2015 with Africa. Comparing this figure to that of 2003 record, it shows that it is a three-fold increase in trade volume. Sub-Saharan Africa alone had a trade volume of 6 billion \$ in 2015. There was a drop down in Turkey's trade with that part of Africa, thus giving a decrease rate in global trade. However, Turkey's share in Africa's total trade still remains same.

Additionally, Turkish contractors are amongst the top undertaker in Africa. According to Hammoura (2016, p. 5), African countries have a share of about 21% in the overall international business volume from Turkish contractors (the share of North Africa rates 19%). This shows the efforts put in place by Turkish contractors. They have gone a long way by undertaking over 1.150 projects in Africa, which worth the Sum of 55 billion \$. The investment of Turkey in Africa keeps growing, and it thus create employment, employ local labor force, export final products to third countries while using home-produced resources. A total of about 6.2 billion \$ of Turkish investment is estimated in Africa (Hammoura, 2016, p. 5).

In the reports published by Financial Times in October 2015, "Turkish investment in Africa creates the largest number of jobs in Africa (16,593 in 2014), compare to the foreign direct investments in the continent" (Hammoura, 2016, p. 3). Looking at the development aid on the other hand, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA-Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı) became the prominent institution through which official aid was channeled to Africa. Turkey put a lot of efforts in the previous years in the field of development. For example, Turkey hosted the UN/Istanbul Somalia Conference on the 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May 2010, which was designed to assist in the peace process in Djibouti. Istanbul Declaration that was adopted during the conference was a road map to settling Somali issue. Today, Turkey has become the largest donor in Somalia among the "Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee" countries. Also, Turkey co-chaired with Egypt in 2010 the International Donor's Conference for the development and reconstruction of Darfur in Cairo. Turkey pledged around 65-70 million \$ during

the conference to support in humanitarian aid, mainly in the field of health, education, and agricultural sectors (Bilgiç and Nascimento, 2014, p. 2).

Bilgiç and Nascimento (2014, p. 2) believe that Turkish developmental and international projects has widely increased in Africa during the previous years through TIKA. This organization has carried out a lot of developmental projects and activities in countries such as; Senegal, Sudan, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gambia just to name a few. Turkey's focused is centered on three main projects in Africa, which include "The Agricultural Development Program for the African Continent", The African Health Program" and "The Vocational Training Program for Africa". Bilgiç and Nascimento (2014, p. 2), in the year 2009, the development aid to Africa by the Turkish government was worth the sum of about 44 million \$ in 2012 through ODA (Official Development Assistance).

Trade transactions between Turkey and Africa in the area of flights have equally play a great role in strengthening relations between both parties. Turkey today is seen to have a total of 48 flights destination to Africa and in 31 countries. This has contributed to Turkish Airlines being the major international airline connecting most African countries to other parts of the world. This airline has equally intensified people to people contacts tremendously through the direct flight between Turkey and African countries. It has also connected both business people and tourist travelling both ways. It can be of no doubt that some transactions between both sides might have come as a result of businessmen meeting on a flight. The level of tourist's visits between Turkey and Africa increase so much last year, compare to the previous years. A total of 885 thousand Africans visited Turkey as tourist, while in 2006, the number was 210 thousand. This difference shows how widely the movement from one side to another has so much grown. This movement of tourists in other words in increasing Turkey's economy, through its flight business and the expenses incurred by tourists in Turkey every year.

## **5. Conclusion**

The economic relations of Turkey with African states did not just start in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but rather it is a product of a chronological account of previous relations in trade and other activities that were created during the Ottoman Empire. One can critically look at this from the Ottoman economic relations with Egypt which was the main trade line that opened up new links to the economy of other African states in both North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. The re-emergence of the economy of modern Turkey in Africa after the cold war pave a way for the establishment of traditional trade links with North Africa, thus strategically extended to cover other areas like central, Southern, and West African countries, together with their respective economic integration networks and regional organizations. Turkey's domestic transformation firmed up Africa-Turkey strategic economic relations with the aim of diversifying its trade agreement with Africa.

Turkey within the 21<sup>st</sup> century have held a total of 10 (ten) Turkish-African Summits so as to boost economic and bilateral relations. Turkey's active involvement in foreign affairs is a significant indicator of its integration with globalization process. AK Party with its philosophy of making Turkey a regional power and a global player pave a way for Turkey's diversify market portfolio and this made Turkey to enhance relations with African states. Turkish foreign policy is said to have been drawn clearly with the "The Action Plan" document prepared in 1998 by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Looking at the general outlook of Turkey in its foreign policy, one is tempted to say that it is based more on free market economy where concrete roles are drafted. The public and private sectors have regulatory roles that are used for the implementation of a bilateral foreign trade policy. Goods and products are traded freely among institutions and individuals. According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, great emphasis has of now been place on structural reforms in the economy of Turkey. Privatization process in line to this has been accelerated, and the public finance has also been put into order. Noteworthy reforms in sectors such as social security, agriculture, energy and communication has also been implemented in financial markets. The implementation of reforms by Turkey strengthens the infrastructure for economic institutions, and the country's economy has been made more resistant to "probable fluctuations in international markets" via the creation of autonomous institutions.

Turkey had developed some interest in Africa since during the period of Cold War, but the strong urge for Turkey to strengthen its relations with Africa became so obvious and vital until the

21<sup>st</sup> century. This has gone a long way at seeing Turkey's present position in Africa. Being a strong Afro-Eurasian state, Turkey's interest to Africa was not just based on the transient political, social, religion and economic expectations. It was rather a product whereby a strong historical and cultural aspect upholds. Turkey and Africa relations have so much gained grounds since the declaration of Turkey as a strategic partner of the Africa Union in January 2008. According to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the following points are so vital for Turkey in extending relations with Africa: (i) to establish a closed relation by re-enforcing bilateral high visits to Africa, and standing as an actor in defending the legitimate rights and interest of the countries Africa through multilateral and bilateral talks, (ii) to stand as a supportive actor in overcoming Africa's economic difficulties through investments, humanitarian and trade assistance, (iii) to play a diplomatic role in the peaceful settlement of disputes in Africa, (iv) to actively participate in peacekeeping missions within the continent. These points show that Turkey really has a vision in Africa and is really determined to achieve it.

Turkey's increasing used of soft power strategies drive a great desire to tie both the economy of Turkey and Africa more closely. From the aforementioned, Turkey's soft power content ranges from professional and cultural exchange, agriculture, and humanitarian assistance. The opening to Africa by Turkey has gained a lot of importance especially in terms of opening up new markets as a "way of reducing its dependence on traditional European and Russian trading partners".

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