

# Turkey and Africa in the Context of South-South Cooperation

Güney-Güney İşbirliği Bağlamında Türkiye ve Afrika

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## Abstract

In spite of their historical and cultural ties, Turkey and African countries did not develop close relations during the Cold War. The unstable environment in domestic politics of Turkey and several African countries hindered a proper rapprochement in the 1990s as well. Since the turn of the 21st century, however, they have been engaged in a fast-paced cooperation. Turkey's growing engagement in Africa has progressed in tandem with that of other Asian powers, namely China, India, South Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia. When the increasing presence in Africa of Latin American countries, of Brazil in particular, is added into the whole picture, it can be said that the first two decades of the 21st century has seen a boom in South South Cooperation. This paper treats the mentioned cooperation paradigm as a new aspect of Turkish foreign policy. Given the fact that Ankara was ideologically distanced to the Global South during and soon after the Cold War, the fast-paced Turkish-African cooperation over the last two decades denotes a partial revision in Turkish foreign policy orientation. In the context of this revisionist orientation, the main finding of the paper is that Turkey considers SSC as a way of not only reframing its relations with its African nations but also strengthening the cooperation between rising powers, underdeveloped nations and Islamic political-economic institutions.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Africa, Development Cooperation, South-South Cooperation, Triangular Cooperation.

## Öz

Türkiye, tarihsel ve kültürel bağlarına rağmen, Afrika ülkeleri ile Soğuk Savaş döneminde yakın ilişkiler geliştirmekten kaçınmıştır. Türkiye'nin ve birçok Afrika ülkesinin iç politikalarında devam eden istikrarsızlık ortamı, 1990'lı yıllarda da tam bir yakınlaşmaya imkan vermezken 21. yüzyıl başlarında Türkiye ile Afrika ülkeleri arasında hızlandırılmış bir işbirliği süreci gözlenmiştir. Türkiye'nin Afrika'daki varlığını artırma süreci, başta Çin, Hindistan, Güney Kore, Malezya ve Endonezya olmak üzere, diğer Asya ülkelerinin Afrika'daki faaliyetlerini yoğunlaştırmalarına paralel bir seyir izlemiştir. Brezilya gibi Latin Amerika ülkelerinin de Afrika'da giderek daha görünür oldukları dikkate alınrsa, 21. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde Güney-Güney İşbirliği paradigmasının ciddi bir ivme kazandığı söylenebilir. Sözü edilen işbirliği paradigması, bu makalede Türk dış politikasının yeni bir boyutu olarak ele alınmaktadır. Türkiye'nin gerek Soğuk Savaş zarfında gerekse Soğuk Savaş'ın ertesinde ideolojik olarak Küresel Güney'e mesafeli olduğu göz önünde bulundurulursa, son yirmi yılda hızlanan Türkiye-Afrika işbirliğinin Türk dış politika yöneliminde kısmî bir revizyona işaret ettiği söylenebilir. Söz konusu revizyonist yaklaşım bağlamında Türkiye, Güney-Güney İşbirliği'ni hem Afrika devletleriyle ilişkilerini yeni bir çerçevede sürdürme, hem de yükselen güçler, az gelişmiş ülkeler ve İslamî siyasal-ekonomik kuruluşlar arasındaki işbirliğini güçlendirme aracı olarak görmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Afrika, Kalkınma İşbirliği, Güney-Güney İşbirliği, Üçlü İşbirliği.

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## Introduction

As more external powers have engaged in the continent, Africa's geopolitical significance increased considerably in the first quarter of the 21st century. Development cooperation with rising powers, with Asian ones in particular, has provided African countries with a room for manoeuvre to better manage their relations with the traditional partners. Given the benefits expected to be obtained from the new cooperation environment, African countries have attached importance to diversifying their partnerships. Turkey's growing engagement with the continent coincided with this readiness in Africa to embrace new development partners, as the latter have introduced a new cooperation paradigm that appears to be "in tune with African priorities and less cynical than Western cooperation" (Hugon, 2010, pp. 99-118).

Due to its identity/security nexus, Turkey was indeed closer to the so-called Global North until the early 2000s (Donelli and Laveggi, 2016, p. 94). Following the ascension to power of Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), Turkey set out to reorient its foreign policy and to establish rapprochement with the Global South. In this regard, it is possible to depict Turkey as a newcomer in South-South Cooperation (SSC). Although elites of the Global South operate within the dominant structures of global political and economic order (Gray and Gills, 2016), it is a fact that some of them, including Turkey, stand out with a revisionist rhetoric. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement that "the world is bigger than five" with reference to the structure of the UN Security Council is an exemplary rhetoric of this kind. The possibility that a middle power like Turkey can bring about a change in the current world order is limited. However, Ankara is trying to trigger a change in the regional and global political landscape by strengthening relations between rising powers, underdeveloped nations and Islamic institutions within the framework of SSC.

Turkey's growing ties with African nations can exemplify the country's position with regard to SSC. With the aim of analysing this position, the paper will outline the historical evolution of Turkish-African relations and Turkey's recent efforts in terms of development cooperation with African countries, as well as its performance and perceived role in SSC.

### 1. The Evolution of Turkish-African Relations

African nations and Turkey are not newly acquainted partners. Their interaction with each other dates back to the Tūlūnid and Ikhshīdid periods when Turkish and African (mainly Sudanese) troops fought side by side for several decades in the north-eastern corner of Africa (Lev, 1997, p. 133). This military coalescence continued during the Fātimid, Ayyūbid, Mamlūk and Ottoman periods<sup>i</sup>, culminating in growing social contacts and intermarriages between Africans and Turks.<sup>ii</sup> People-to-people interaction developed into strong political relations as well, particularly against the colonialist expansion efforts. It was the case for not only the northern and central African states of Kanem-Bornu and Darfur, but also the eastern African Swahili states that sought the Ottoman military assistance against the European colonial powers (Benî Şeyh, 2016; Özbaran, 2009; Yılmaz, 2017). This politico-military cooperation had a religious aspect, of course, which made the Ottoman influence felt in remoter parts of the continent from Niger to South Africa (Gençoğlu, 2018; Şahin, 2013).

Turkish-African relations were minimised after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of new Republic of Turkey in the early 1920s. From then on, African nations struggled for decolonisation, while Turkey strived to survive in the post-World War I international order. However, there were instances of informal politico-military cooperation between African nations and Turkey during that period. Mehmed Vehib Pasha, previously a general in the Ottoman army, served as a military advisor to Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in the Second Italo-Abyssinian War in 1935-36, for example (Di Colloredo, 2009, pp. 190-196).

Feeling the growing threat of Soviet invasion soon after the World War II, Turkey joined in the US-led Western bloc and was not seriously interested in African affairs (Özkan and Akgün, 2010, p. 527). As a result, most of the African nations could not receive explicit diplomatic support from Ankara in their struggle for independence. It was the case for French colonies in particular, which caused a moral dilemma in Turkish

foreign policy towards Africa. So as not to harm its relations with France, for instance, Turkey voted against the Algerian position in 1955, while abstaining in 1957, 1958, and 1959 in the related UN General Assembly votings (Ersoy, 2012, p. 693). In the meantime, Turkey provided clandestine military assistance to Algerian liberation movement, as an expression of the dilemmatic thought that was uttered by the Turkish diplomatic circles as “Algerians are our brothers while France is our ally” (Bayram, 2014, pp. 261-278).

Despite having doubts about the viability of non-alignment, Turkey attended the first large-scale Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955, which was a milestone in the formation of South-South Cooperation (Amitav, 2016; Murat, 2018). In September 1960, Selim Sarper, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs then, stated that “Turkey belongs to the Asia-Africa bloc and always supports the case of these nations within its commitments” (Ersoy, 2012, p. 689). In line with this approach, Ankara recognised the newly independent African countries and immediately established diplomatic relations with them. Yet, Turkish-African cooperation was generally limited during the Cold War, as newly independent African states remained dependent on former colonial powers which Turkey took sides with. Turkey was overtly engaged in the late Cold War decolonisation movements of Zimbabwe and Namibia, but this engagement also did not entail a proactive and systematic approach towards Africa.

Following the end of the Cold War, semi-revisionist tendencies emerged in foreign policy orientations of Turkey and African countries. The latter aimed to end or ease their dependence on former colonial powers by diversifying their relations in a changing world order. In Turkey, the revisionist tendency included neo-Ottomanist and Islamic motivations, as in the case of Turgut Özal (1989-1993) and Necmettin Erbakan governments (1996-1997). The policies of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*/abbreviated as AK Party or AKP), which has been in power since 2002, have represented a significant differentiation from the previous revisionist orientations in Turkish foreign policy. Erbakan’s attempted alliance with Muslim-populated countries, including those in Africa, is thought to have been “an explicit alternative to alliance with the West”, but the AK Party government has reached out to other parts of the world to complement, rather than replace, Turkey’s ties to the West (Taşpınar, 2008, p.14). The AK Party government has maintained this logic of complementarity by neither emphasizing nor trivializing Islamism in its foreign policy.

## **2. Turkey as a Key Player in African Development**

Turkey’s systematic opening to Africa gained momentum after the Justice and Development Party came to power. As a clearer sign of the importance it attached to Africa, Turkey declared 2005 as the year of Africa. In March the same year, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Ethiopia and South Africa, which represented “the first official visit by a Turkish prime minister to a country south of the equator” (Özkan and Akgün, 2010, p. 533). From 2009 to 2011, former Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania, while Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (as President from 2014) paid official visits to at least 23 sub-Saharan African countries, namely Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Presidents of these countries, as well as those of Benin, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone, paid frequent official visits to Turkey in return (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2019).

The emergence of Turkey as a more assertive regional power appears to be favourably received by African countries that aspire to diversify their development partners. Having been accorded observer status at the African Union in 2005, Turkey was declared a strategic partner by the African Union Summit in 2008. As another indication of immediate and strong African approval of Turkey’s efforts, 50 out of 53 African states voted in favour of Turkey’s non-permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council for the period 2009-2010. The fact that African countries deemed Turkey as a significant international actor was confirmed

by high-level participation in the ensuing summit diplomacy of Ankara. It is of note that 49 African countries participated in the 1st Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit which took place in Istanbul in August 2008. The summit initiated the institutionalisation of Turkish-African ties via the Framework of Cooperation for Turkey-Africa Partnership adopted at the event in question. Agriculture, health, education, energy, infrastructure and security were listed among the primary areas of cooperation. The 2nd Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit took place in November 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. It was held under the theme of “a new model of partnership for the strengthening of sustainable development and integration”, with the aim of increasing the Turkish FDI to Africa and creating an environment conducive to economic development of African countries (Bacchi, 2015).

Turkish-African cooperation summits were followed by business forums co-organised by the Turkish Ministry of Trade and the African Union Commission. The 1st and 2nd Turkey-Africa Economic and Business Forums took place in 2016 and 2018, respectively. Primarily the promotion of public-private partnerships in infrastructure, energy and transportation sectors was highlighted. With reference to its steady growth over the last decade as a major economic power in the region, Turkey expressed readiness to share its development experience with African counterparts, while the African Union declared its will to forge partnership with Turkey in designing, financing and managing projects under the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA)<sup>iii</sup> and the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI)<sup>iv</sup>. The importance of enhancing Africa’s manufacturing capacities via the establishment of regional hubs as a means to increase intra-African trade was also underlined. Raising awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its implications for the private and public sectors was another discussed objective. All African speakers laid emphasis on the AfCFTA that is one of the key projects under Agenda 2063<sup>v</sup> and expected to create a single continental market for goods and services for Africa’s 1.2 billion people. Turkish-African cooperation was set as a significant step for African countries in boosting their chances of attaining the goals set out in Agenda 2063 development framework (African Union Press Release, 2018).

Through the accelerated contacts, Turkey has been one of the new key players in Africa, along with China, India, and Brazil, as portrayed in the African Economic Outlook 2011 prepared by the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This portrayal has been attested by Turkey’s growing diplomatic and economic presence not only in Africa but also throughout the world. The number of Turkish diplomatic missions abroad rose to 241 in 2018 from 163 in 2002. In line with this upsurge, Turkey opened diplomatic missions in 42 African countries, while their number was 12 in the early years of the 21st century. As stated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ankara assertively aims to increase the number of its African embassies to 54 (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018). In this period, African countries also increased the number of their diplomatic missions in Turkey from 10 to 33. The growing political and economic contacts made travelling between Africa and Turkey more frequent and wider. Flying to more countries than any other airline in the world, Turkish Airlines (2018) now fly to 55 destinations in 37 countries in Africa. In 2003, it was merely flying to North African countries.

Turkey’s engagement in Africa has reverberated especially in the fields of trade and economy. So as to expand trade and investment volume, Turkey promised to offer tariff preferences and/or duty free privileges to African countries in line with its obligations arising from its Customs Union with the European Union. Over the last 15 years, Turkey’s trade volume with Africa quadrupled from \$5 billion to over \$20 billion. During this period, Turkey’s exports to Africa rose from \$2.1 billion to \$11.7 billion, and its imports rose from \$3.3 billion to \$8.9 billion. Turkish investments in Africa exceeded \$6.2 billion and Turkish contractors have undertaken hundreds of projects worth \$55 billion (Şahin and Ergöçün, 2018). The number of African countries with which Turkey signed agreements of trade and economic cooperation increased to 39, while it was 23 in 2003. Free trade agreements between Turkey and four African countries, namely Egypt, Mauritius, Morocco, and Tunisia are in force today, while it was literally none in 2003. The number of African countries with which Turkey signed agreements for reciprocal protection of investments is 19, while it was only 6 in 2003. These agreements have

been accompanied by Turkey's tangible contribution to African development. In 2014, for instance, Turkish investment generated the largest number (16,593) of jobs in Africa when compared to the other foreign direct investments in the continent. The same year China and India generated 10,811 and 6,193 jobs, respectively (Tepeciklioğlu et al., 2017, p. 63).

Meanwhile, African contribution to Turkish economy and foreign trade has also grown, as the number of African migrants in Turkey has risen over the last decade. Approximately 1.5 million Africans are living in Turkey. Although one may find Africans in every province of Turkey, most of them prefer to live in metropolis Istanbul. African population in Istanbul is estimated to be 150,000, with the Senegalese and Nigerians constituting the biggest group. As the numbers of African restaurants, barber shops and churches have risen in Istanbul, the African population has spilled over from Kumkapı and Tarlabaşı into almost all districts of Istanbul. Those who study in Turkey are the most successful ones. They firstly assist traders at the textile stores during their student life and then open their own businesses. Their commercial activities involve mainly the exports of textile, furniture, construction iron and medicine. For instance, a Senegalese businessman, owner of a courier company with its office in the district of Fatih, has been not only shipping goods to Senegal and Gabon but also assisting Turkish contractors for construction projects in Africa. With his help, a Turkish firm won the tender for the airport mechanical and decoration works in Guinea. Another businessman from the Democratic Republic of Congo has a house in the district of Esenyurt in the name of his company and has been selling goods to African countries from Istanbul since 2010. A Guinean businessman who graduated from Istanbul University Business School and established a courier company has been in the business of shipping food, textile products, diesel fuel and spare parts to Guinea (Bilgehan, 2018; Şimşek and Sayman, 2009).

### **2.1. TİKA's role in Turkish-African development cooperation.**

There is a multitude of Turkish public institutions and non-governmental organisations involved in Turkey's development cooperation with African countries. The most outstanding of those institutions is the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı*), known as TİKA. The agency is responsible for the implementation of Turkish development cooperation activities in collaboration with other Turkish institutions as well as international organisations and bilateral donors. It collects, compiles and reports Turkey's official development assistance (ODA) data to the OECD and publishes an annual activity report (Hatipoğlu, 2018, pp. 99-116). Since its establishment in 1992, the agency has implemented projects throughout the world from Central Asia to the Balkans, from Latin America to the Pacific islands. Today, it implements projects in 150 countries with 61 program coordination offices in 59 countries, 21 of which are in Africa.<sup>vi</sup> After Turkey declared 2005 as the Year of Africa, TİKA opened new offices across Africa to improve its geographic access and augment its number of projects. The first TİKA Programme Coordinator Office in Africa was opened in Addis Ababa in 2005. Khartoum and Dakar offices followed it in 2006 and 2007, respectively (Özkan and Akgün, 2010, p. 537).

It is worth noting that TİKA officially defines its development cooperation portfolio within the South-South Cooperation. Through demand-driven activities, capacity-building programs, dispatch of experts, donation of equipment and financing infrastructure projects, TİKA carries out development cooperation projects in the fields of agriculture, water sanitation, energy, transportation, media, promotion of cultural heritage, education, health, disaster management, and humanitarian assistance, but it can be said that the agency is mainly engaged in education- and health-related projects. According to TİKA's annual reports, Turkish development cooperation projects in the field of education throughout Africa include building the Sudanese-Turkish Vocational Education Centre in Khartoum; establishing a modern language laboratory within the Dakar Islamic Institute in Senegal; donating hundreds of computers to Somalian universities; building multi-media classrooms within Yaoundé and Bamenda universities in Cameroon; establishing a computer laboratory in a Zimbabwean school; improving the physical conditions of a Malian school delivering education to hearing-impaired and speech-handicapped students; renovating the Turcology Department within the University of

Algiers; furnishing a student dormitory at the Universal Islamic and Cultural Trust Association in Djibouti; organising vocational training courses in Ethiopia; providing sewing and knitting machines to women's education centres in Ghana, Niger and Namibia; illuminating 56 high schools in Kenya with solar energy; providing equipment to Butane University in Sudan; constructing an additional classroom to enhance the physical capacity of a vocational high school in Chad, and providing classroom furniture and computers to schools in Côte d'Ivoire. As a recent example, Turkish Ministry of National Education and Cameroonian Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training signed a protocol on technology transfer in vocational training in March 2018. While Cameroonian Minister Zacharie Perevet noted that the center is expected to boost employment in Cameroon and is an indication of Turkey's readiness to support Africa's development in the field of education, Turkish Minister of Education İsmet Yılmaz shared the following details regarding the protocol:

We will meet the requirements of the protocol together with TİKA. As part of the protocol, a center of excellence will be established in Cameroon to offer vocational training. Vocational training centers for garment manufacturing and construction technology will be set up, and training programs will be provided for teachers and students with Cameroon. In-service trainings will be organized in Turkey and Cameroon for Cameroonian teachers. Laboratories and workshops of vocational training centers will be equipped. Furthermore, business people, who would like to make investments related to vocational training centers, will be offered guidance and consultancy services. Once the vocational training institutions we will establish in Cameroon with TİKA become operational, we hope that other African countries are going to see this project as a sample case and they will ask Turkey to expand this initiative to other African states (TİKA, 2020).

Another critical field of TİKA-sponsored development cooperation projects is health. The relevant projects in Africa include building a maternal and infant healthcare center in Niger; providing newborn resuscitation training to health personnel working at eight different hospitals in Senegal; renovating and equipping newborn and pediatric intensive care units in Seychelles; constructing a building at the Nouakchott Maternal and Infant Hospital to be used as an intensive care unit; donating an X-Ray device to the Burundi Prince Louis Rwagasore Hospital; providing medical equipment to the Pediatric Oncology Department of the Namibian Central Hospital; renovating and equipping hospitals in eSwatini and Lesotho; providing technical materials to the Juba Hospital in South Sudan; constructing a prenatal healthcare centre in the Ijara District Hospital in Kenya as well as building a stabilized 500-meter road between the mentioned hospital and the Women's Health Centre in the same district, and donating 49 ambulances to 18 African countries, etc. Particularly the hospitals built by Turkey in Libya, Somalia and Sudan continue to serve thousands of Africans otherwise unable to access healthcare due to ongoing conflicts. Kalakla Turkish Hospital in Sudan was constructed in 1995, followed by Nyala Sudan-Turkish Training and Research Hospital built in Darfur in 2013, Somalia-Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Training and Research Hospital inaugurated in Mogadishu in 2015, and the Physical Therapy Hospital in Misrata, Libya, completed in 2016. The hospital in Mogadishu is the largest one in East Africa staffed with 90 Turkish doctors. The hospital in Nyala is the only one offering full-range treatment in the entire region as well. Over 400,000 people have benefited from Turkish-built medical institutions in Africa (Cogalan, 2016; Çomak, 2011, pp. 10-31; Kadioğlu and Tutar, 2019, pp. 163-172).

As mentioned earlier, Turkish contribution to African development is not limited to education and health. It is observed in a wide range of areas from agriculture to sports, from aviation to media. Drilling hundreds of water wells in several African countries; furnishing a phytopathology laboratory in Benin; constructing a center within the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to train foreign service professionals; organising cookery, housekeeping and service training for 351 personnel employed at the 31st African Union Summit in Nouakchott in July 2018; providing vehicles to the Mozambican Commodity Exchange; donating 20 buses to the Municipality of Monrovia; delivering office equipment to Bissau-Guinean Ministry of Administrative Reform and Public Works; renovating and furnishing the Malian National Parliament building; establishing a

fully-equipped criminal laboratory for Sudan Police Department; establishing a radio station (Radio Hope) within the Mogadishu University; providing technical equipment to Sao Tome & Principe State Television, Radio and News Agency; giving technological support to Juba Airport; improving the physical conditions of Senegalese Sports Ministry building; expanding the facilities of the Ottoman Cricket Club<sup>vii</sup> in South Africa are some of the projects undertaken by the Turkish cooperation agency in Africa (TİKA, 2019).

### 3. Turkey's Performance and Perceived Role in SSC

Turkish State Planning Organization (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*, DPT) launched the country's first technical cooperation programme in June 1985, with a comprehensive package worth \$10 million, destined towards institutional capacity building in Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. After becoming a founding member of the OECD and observer of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1991, Turkey began to pursue SSC modalities in a more assertive way. The establishment of TİKA in 1992 and the enlargement of its geographical scope significantly contributed to this assertiveness.

The actual upswing in Turkey's commitment to SSC occurred in the first quarter of the 21st century. Especially between 2002 and 2007, Turkey's SSC fund increased by 20 times, while Colombia and South Korea's were multiplied by 3 and 4 times, respectively. Turkey's net disbursements of SSC budget were \$602 million in 2007. From 2009 to 2016, Ankara donated \$60,000 to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC<sup>viii</sup>), though the figure is modest when compared to the total donation amounting to \$21 million. Nearly half of it was provided by China (Kamioka and Callejas, 2017; Özkan, 2018, p. 569).

Turkey is among the participating countries of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a partner of the UNFSSC, which focuses on South-South knowledge exchange and capacity development aimed at increasing productivity of smallholder farms and promoting rural business linkages. Given the importance it attaches to active participation, Turkey served two consecutive terms at the IFAD Executive Board from 2008 to 2010 and was elected to the Advisory Group in 2013-2015 to represent the List C2, along with Afghanistan, China, India, Pakistan and South Korea. Turkey's contribution to the IFAD amounts to \$1.2 million for the 8th budgetary period, displaying an increase of \$300.000 compared with the previous period (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019b).

Turkey is one of the 15 countries<sup>ix</sup> which have partnership agreements with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). In September 2017, the UNOSSC and its Turkey-related partner Turkic Council<sup>x</sup> launched their joint report entitled "South-South in Action: How the Turkic Council uses South-South Cooperation to Promote Regional and Global Development". Being the first publication attributed to the role of an intergovernmental organisation in implementing SSC, the report illuminated Turkey's and the Turkic Council's contributions to the development of this cooperation and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda (Schnitzer-Skjønsberg, 2017).

Among the relevant activities, official development assistance (ODA) to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) occupies an important place in Turkey's SSC performance. In 2007, Turkey hosted a LDC summit for the first time. During the summit, Turkey committed \$20 million development aid for those countries' use. Turkish assistance to the LDCs amounted to \$156.5 million in 2010 and rose by 79% in 2011, reaching \$279.81 million (TİKA, 2011). Thereafter Turkey committed to donate \$200 million annually to the LDCs, but it exceeded this commitment by donating over \$1.5 billion from 2011 to 2015. 22% of Turkish total official assistance went to Africa in 2011, with Somalia receiving the largest aid. 31% of Turkish assistance was delivered to the continent in 2012, with Egypt, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia being among the top ten recipients of Turkish total bilateral ODA (TİKA, 2012). In 2013, African countries received 24.7% of Turkish total development assistance, with Egypt, Somalia, and Tunisia taking the lead again (TİKA, 2013). Approximately 10.9 and 4.8 of Turkish assistance was destined to Africa in 2014 and 2015, respectively (TİKA, 2014; TİKA, 2015). Although Turkey provided \$143,8 and \$153,4 million in the form of grant to African countries in 2016 and 2017, Turkish ODA

to Africa appeared as -306,2 and -296,6 million US dollars in the respective years. As per the OECD-DAC rules, the reimbursement of the concessional lending provided to the countries should be deducted from the total assistance of that year while reporting. Therefore, net assistance amount for 2016 and 2017 was calculated by deducting the 450 million dollars reimbursement amount of the concessional lending from the total (TİKA, 2017).

Official development assistance to gross national income (GNI) ratio is a crucial determinant for donors' performance. Turkish ODA/GNI ratios were 0.13% in 2010; 0.17% in 2011, 0.32% in 2012, 0.42% in 2013, 0.45% in 2014, maintaining the upward trend. In 2015, that ratio equalled to 0.95%, which was quite above the UN's goal of 0.70%. Thus Turkey became the world's most generous country considering the ODA/GNI ratio in 2015. As for the ratio of humanitarian aid to national income, Turkey continued to be the leading country in the world in three consecutive years of 2015, 2016 and 2017 (Bayar and Arpa, 2019; TİKA, 2017).

Along with its increasing performance in development aid, Turkey played an active role in SSC events by hosting the 4th United Nations Conference on LDCs in Istanbul in May 2011 and the 9th UN Global South-South Development Expo in Antalya in November 2017. The latter in particular is seen as "a source of support for closer links among South-South centres of excellence". The theme of Expo 2017 was "South-South Cooperation in the Era of Economic, Social and Environmental Transformation: Road to the 40th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action." It brought together more than 850 participants from 120 countries, including those in Africa (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019a).

From a broader point of view, it is understood that Turkey desires to involve Africa and the Islamic world into the SSC framework through the support of BRICS. This desire was expressed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who attended the BRICS Summit in South Africa in July 2018. The event constituted Ankara's first-ever high level contact with the BRICS. The theme of the session Erdoğan attended was 'Global South-South Cooperation'. Pointing out to this theme, Erdoğan said "Turkey is among the leading countries in terms of development assistance which is one of the most important component of the South-South Cooperation". After stating that Turkey "closely follows the role the BRICS seeks to assume in the South-South Cooperation", Erdoğan underscored the involvement of Islamic institutions in the mentioned cooperation framework as follows:

It is vital to promote the cooperation between BRICS and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. We can thus reap the benefits of South-South Cooperation towards a more equitable world. It is worthwhile to evaluate the possibility of cooperation between the Islamic Development Bank and the New Development Bank of BRICS so as to support Africa's development efforts in particular (Diriliş Postası, 2019).

Although cooperation between the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the BRICS New Development Bank is a new proposal and may be a remarkable aspect of SSC, the IsDB and UNOSSC have already been partners since the mid-1980s when the two organisations convened a joint seminar in Jeddah so as to discuss utilising SSC modalities in developmental tasks. In subsequent years, IsDB and UNOSSC collaboratively assisted member countries in organising capacities and needs matching (CNM) events. This search within IsDB for a more enhanced SSC mechanism coincided with the development of the Member Country Partnership Strategy of Turkey in 2010, during which Ankara signalled its enthusiasm to share the country's expertise, technology and resources with other developing countries. In 2014, for instance, Turkey met Gambia's capacity need in the health sector through IsDB's Reverse Linkage mechanism<sup>xi</sup> in which SESRIC<sup>xii</sup>, TİKA and the Yıldırım Beyazıt University participated in the project as the main partners. UNOSSC Director Jorge Chediek (2018, p. 19) notes that development projects of this nature emanating from CNM events organised by the IsDB member countries, notably Turkey, had a positive impact on the countries concerned, leading to increased productivity, employment generation, import substitution and even a boost to the respective countries' export potential.<sup>xiii</sup>



In collaboration with IsDB, Turkey contributes to African SSC reporting as well. Many African countries have become active SSC partners by starting to develop the First African South-South Cooperation Report in November 2018. Measuring and reporting their activities in SSC is an opportunity for African countries to define their priorities in SSC. The participants from 12 African countries (Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa, Uganda) undertook their national level assessments to collect the data, including the sectors, partners and modalities of such exchanges. The guidelines of African SSC reporting were jointly developed by UNDP and the IsDB, while technical and financial support was provided by the Turkish cooperation agency TİKA. African countries thus set out to learn establishing reporting mechanisms, identifying SSC models and conducting mapping for resource centers (Fasil, 2018).

Turkey is also actively engaged in Triangular Cooperation (TrC)<sup>xiv</sup>. Examples include cooperation with Japan International Cooperation Agency on geosciences and industrial automation technologies, with the Korea International Cooperation Agency to support countries in combating human trafficking, and with the Singapore Cooperation Programme on food security, meteorology and water resource management (Schnitzer-Skjønsberg, 2017). Another example is the Turkey-Azerbaijan Cooperation Program in Tanzania, whereby nearly a hundred Tanzanian patients underwent free cataract surgery and hundreds of people in need were given eye examinations in February 2014. Turkey-Singapore-Africa collaboration better exemplifies this sort of cooperation. In February 2018, the Turkish cooperation agency TİKA and the Singapore Cooperation Programme collaborated to provide aviation and satellite meteorology training for African meteorologists. The participants received trainings on use of satellite systems and integration of aviation and meteorology. Carried out by Turkish and Singaporean experts, the training program was attended by meteorologists from 15 African countries (TİKA, 2018). With reference to this sort of activities, a UNDP report (2017) lists Turkey among the middle-income countries that are “taking a more proactive role in SSC/TrC in Africa”.

### **Conclusion**

After augmenting its diplomatic and economic presence in Africa, Ankara has significantly supported African development to the extent that Turkish investment in 2014 generated the largest number of jobs in the continent. In Turkish-African development cooperation, the most effective institution is TİKA with its mainly education- and health-related projects throughout Africa. These projects have not only supported African development efforts but also promoted Turkey's image in the continent. The fact that TİKA officially defines its activities within SSC is important in terms of Turkey's commitment to the cooperation framework in question.

The considerable increase in Turkey's SSC fund and official development assistance to the LDCs, most of which are in Africa, was accompanied by the record of Turkey as the most generous country in the world considering the ODA/GNI ratio in 2015 and the leading country in the world regarding the ratio of humanitarian aid to national income in three consecutive years of 2015, 2016 and 2017. Turkey further made a name for itself as a significant SSC partner by participating and hosting important SSC events.

Turkey's growing engagement in Africa since the turn of the millenium appears to be complementary to Ankara's relations with the West or the Global North and a strategic threshold point in its relations with the rest of the world, particularly the Global South. The Islamic-oriented role Turkey aspires to play in the global South may account for growing Turkish-African ties and the importance Ankara attached to South-South Cooperation. It is of note that Turkey desires to involve the Islamic world into the SSC framework through the support of BRICS. The incumbent Turkish government believes that reaping the benefits of SSC and supporting Africa's development efforts towards a more equitable world will be easier when BRICS and Islamic politico-economic institutions collaborate with each other. This SSC approach gives a hint of the

idiosyncratic role Turkey aspires to play in the global South and indicates that it instrumentalizes the South-South Cooperation to achieve its wider foreign policy goals.

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## Notes:

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<sup>i</sup> Tūlūnids reigned in 868-905, İkhshīdids in 935-969, Fātimids in 909-1171, Ayyūbids in 1171-1250, Mamlūks in 1250-1517, and Ottomans in 1299-1922.

<sup>ii</sup> As a result of those socio-historical ties, today there are established Turkish communities of African origin living in Aegean and Mediterranean provinces of Turkey, and African communities of Turkish origin, such as Kouloughlis who are the mixed offspring of Turkish men and local North African women (See, Aksoy, 2019; Kavas, 2001; Olpak, 2005).

<sup>iii</sup> PIDA initiative is led by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, and the NEPAD Secretariat. The overall goal of PIDA is to promote socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Africa through improved access to integrated regional and continental infrastructure networks and services.

<sup>iv</sup> PICI was born out of a proposal by South African President Jacob Zuma to accelerate regional infrastructure development enabled through the political championing of projects. The role of the champions is to bring visibility, coordinate resource mobilisation and ensure project implementation. It presents the opportunity for African Heads of State and Government to be actively involved in the development and implementation of infrastructure projects.

<sup>v</sup> Agenda 2063 refers to “the master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future”. It is “a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.”

<sup>vi</sup> There are TİKA program coordination offices in Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda.

<sup>vii</sup> In 1863, Ottoman scholar Abu Bakr Effendi was sent to South Africa by the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz to teach Muslims in the country and to solve sectarian conflicts between them. Abu Bakr Effendi, who established schools and taught in South Africa, served as a representative of the Ottoman state until his last breath. Abu Bakr Effendi, who contributed to the spread of Islam in South Africa, passed away on August 29, 1880 in Cape Town after 20 years of service, and left behind several mosques and schools. Abdullah Aǧmat, one of the students of the Ottoman Theology School established by Abu Bakr Effendi, founded the Ottoman Cricket Club in 1882 and named it after the school. It was the first sports club established by non-white people in South Africa and was one of the most important establishments which united marginalized people during times of racial segregation. The Club represents the century-old ties between Turkey and South Africa. Through TİKA, Turkey offered significant assistance to the Club which had security problems and an insufficient training area. Players had to wait in line to train. With TİKA’s support, the Club expanded its facilities and ensured its players to prepare for the matches more effectively.

<sup>viii</sup> The United Nations Fund for South-South cooperation (UNFSSC) is a voluntary trust fund to support South-South cooperation partnerships for the benefit of developing countries around the world. UN Member States called for the establishment of this Fund in General Assembly resolution 50/119 of December 1995, and a decade later, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/212 of 2005, the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation was renamed the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation.

<sup>ix</sup> The other countries are Algeria, Brazil, China, Colombia, Honduras, Hungary, India, Germany, Kuwait, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, South Africa and South Korea.

<sup>x</sup> Turkic Council (*Türk Keneşi* in Turkish), officially the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, was established in 2009 as an intergovernmental organization to promote cooperation among Turkic-speaking states. Its founding member states are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. The Council is a partner of UNOSSC.

<sup>xi</sup> Reverse Linkage (RL) mechanism is defined as “a technical cooperation mechanism enabled by IsDB whereby member countries and Muslim communities in non-member countries, exchange their knowledge, expertise, technology and resources to develop their capacities and devise solutions for their autonomous development”.

<sup>xii</sup> Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries

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<sup>xiii</sup> The benefits of the agreements reached at a CNM event of this nature in Pakistan can be exemplified over Algerian and Cameroonian cases. Algeria had experienced the need for experts to assist in conducting a feasibility study for manufacturing automobile components and spare parts for diesel engines in the country. That led to a successful South-South partnership between a private company in Pakistan and a public corporation in Algeria, with supplementary support from IsDB. The other example, Cameroon, had no set-up for manufacturing insecticide sprayers, which were being imported at exorbitant costs. The authorities were planning to set up a manufacturing plant in the country and needed experts to assist in conducting a feasibility study. The manufacturing plant was established through cooperation between a private company in Pakistan and a government institution in Cameroon, with supplementary support from IsDB.

<sup>xiv</sup> Triangular cooperation refers to Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries, supported by a developed country or multilateral organizations, to implement development cooperation programmes and projects.