

THE AK PARTY'S ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA AFTER THE "OPENING ERA"*

"Açılım Dönemi" Sonrası AK Parti'nin Afrika Angajmanı

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Abstract

Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa has been still a new phenomenon not only for Turkish society but also for the Continent and international arena as well. Turkey's policy on Africa represents an approach, active involvement rather than a component of concrete and ongoing relations. Also, it is early to recognize this policy as detailed one. According to government's official declarations "opening era" was terminated and current period signifies strategic partnership era between Turkey and Africa. In spite of this fact "opening" still continues in the strategic partnership period. Some old patterns are used in addition to new patterns like seeking African states' cooperation in fight against terrorism. Some differences exist in implementation and formulation of African policy during different terms of the AK Party's governance.

Keywords: *Africa, the AK Party, strategic partnership era, terrorism, security.*

Özet

Türkiye'nin Afrika'ya yönelik dış politikası gerek Türkiye toplumu gerekse kıta ve uluslararası arena için hâlâ yeni bir fenomeni teşkil etmektedir. Türkiye'nin Afrika politikası somut ve devam eden ilişkilerin bir ögesinden ziyade bir yaklaşımı, aktif bir dahiliyeti temsil etmektedir. Ayrıca bu siyaseti detaylı olarak tanımlamak için henüz erkendir. Hükümetin resmi açıklamalarına göre "açılım dönemi" sonlandırılmıştır ve mevcut dönem Türkiye-Afrika arasında stratejik ortaklık dönemini temsil etmektedir. Buna rağmen stratejik ortaklık döneminde "açılım" halen devam etmektedir. Çeşitli eski yapıların yanında terörizmle mücadelede Afrika devletlerinin işbirliğini arama gibi yeni unsurlar da eklenmektedir. AK Parti yönetiminin çeşitli evrelerinde Afrika siyasetinin uygulanmasında ve oluşturulmasında farklılıklar bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Afrika, AK Parti, stratejik ortaklık dönemi, terörizm, güvenlik.*

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Introduction

The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to the fore with the claim to change Turkey's internal perception not only towards domestic politics but also towards formulation and implementation of its foreign policy. Also, the Turkish government wants to alter international community's perception on Ankara's foreign policy. In fact AK Party's foreign policy towards Africa indicates its aforementioned different approaches regarding policy formulation and implementation.¹

The AK Party's active involvement in Africa marked new beginning for the Turkish Republic's overall policy on the Continent; but there have been also differences in implementation and formulation of this policy during different terms of the AK Party's governance. For instance, the AK Party came to power in 2002, it was only after the year of 2005 that it focused and gave more importance on African policy. In 2014, on the other hand, it was revealed that the opening era was completed and strategic partnership era was started.

In this essay, under the AK Party's governments Turkey's policy towards Africa will be analyzed by focusing on several issues like security after the second half of the 2000s. It will be acclaimed that Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa has been still a new phenomenon not only for Turkish society but also for the Continent and international arena as well. Actually it will be mentioned that the Turkey's policy on Africa represents an approach, active involvement rather than a component of concrete and ongoing relations. Also it is early to recognize this policy as detailed one. According to government's official declarations current period signifies strategic partnership era between Turkey and Africa. In spite of this fact "opening" still continues in the strategic partnership period. Some old patterns are used in addition to new patterns like seeking African states' cooperation in fight against terrorism.

These both old and new patterns of approach/active involvement are mainly stemmed from the AK Party's goal of presenting itself as a

¹ In this essay, with the term 'Africa' the author refers to the 55 members of the African Union including Morocco.

successful actor both in domestic politics and foreign affairs. Hence, relations with the African states help Ankara to present and underline its “changing status in international politics from recipient country to net donor country”. However still in this strategic period, future of this kind of involvement relies largely on Turkey’s efforts to develop its relations with Africa. Because till this day, African states haven’t shown same degree of interest and haven’t taken as much steps as Ankara has done for intensifying cooperation. For this reason, Turkey must formulate and implement multi-dimensional foreign policy in a realistic manner to get desired steps from Africa. Most importantly, apart from the economical aspect of bilateral relationship, Ankara must underline other important dimensions needed by African states like security.

1. Security Aspect of the AK Party’s Approach Towards Africa

A brand-new aspect was added to Ankara’s involvement in Turkey in the mid-2010s: security dimension. It has linked both with domestic and foreign affairs. Fight against terrorism, participating into international efforts on stability and its contribution on military missions in particular African states are most crucial components of this new aspect. Ankara’s contribution into anti-piracy missions in the Horn of Africa and its opening of military training base in near future in Somalia have been outstanding actions regarding security aspect of Turkey’s involvement in Africa. Actually, this domain related with stability has the potential to surpass economic aspect of Turkey’s African relations; even to redefine them.

Nevertheless, the AK Party’s decision to include Africa into its fight against Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization (FETO), underscores security aspect. In fact, recent diplomatic steps’ or initiatives’ main drive can be recognized as explaining FETO and its threats not only to Turkey but also to the African states. In another words, Ankara wants Africa’s cooperation in its fight against FETO. In this conjunction, the FETO and its activities in the Continent have taken most of the attention. For instance with opening schools since the late 1990s, before the AK Party’s rule, FETO wanted to spread its vision of Islamist

beliefs and get support of African society. With the start of the AK Party era, FETO increased its activities both in Turkey and in international arena due to convergence of some beliefs and interests with the AK Party and heads of leading state institutions of the Turkish Republic. For a peculiar period, the government and the Gülen Movement had mutually beneficial relations in opening to Africa. The AK Party facilitated and helped the Gülenist movement and in return Turkish effects were increased on certain African states. The government supported such activities by assuring public that they changed Africa's perception regarding Turkey and gave some advantages in Turkey's competition with other international actors. Moreover, one has to bear in mind that apart from developing relations with Africa the small and medium sized business communities-now affiliated with FETO- have another common point with the government: they had belonged to the same conservative Islamist tendency. For this reason, the government's relations with those communities and its support result in questioning whether the AK Party's agenda on Africa had any religious dimension.

Furthermore, some additional examples on civil society organizations with Islamist identity can be given. The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (*İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı*), infamous for the Mavi Marmara Incident, has conducted different types of civil activities in nearly 41 African states. The Confederation of Businessman and Industrialists of Turkey (*Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu*, TUSKON), on the other hand, lost its status so do its validity internally and externally due to its connection with FETO. Its members are arrested on the grounds of membership in a terrorist organization, founding and executing a terrorist network.² Henceforth some useful tools are ceased to be exist and one dimension of soft-power is left missing; waiting to be fulfilled by other non-governmental or governmental institutions.

Approachment to Somalia, relations with Somalia provide some answers for Ankara's insistence to formulate and then pursue policy

2 "TUSKON dahil dev şirketlere 'FETÖ' operasyonu; 187 iş adamı hakkında gözaltı kararı", T24, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/tuskon-dahil-dev-sirketlere-feto-operasyonu-187-is-adami-hakkinda-gozalti-karari,355555>, 18 August 2016, (Accessed on 14.04.2017).

to Africa. There have been several dimensions like educational and economic ones that AK Party have referred in its relations. However more recently security dimension has also increased its place in the bilateral agenda. The terrorist organization Al-Shabab's attacks on the Turkish targets, Ankara's negotiator role in Somali affairs and lastly Turkey's goal of opening a military training base in Somalia have effects to alter nature and content of Turkey's rapprochement to Africa.

Al-Shabab's reaction towards Turkey evaluates "Somalia's" articulation and recognition of Ankara's policies. From time to time, al-Shabab has conducted terrorist attacks against Turkish targets. It declares that it is against Turkey's actions in Somalia due to the fact that Ankara has supported secular institutions and Mogadishu government. To Ankara, the terrorist organization is not comfortable with Turkey's humanitarian help and support to Somalia so al-Shabab's displeasure becomes one of the reasons for attack. Moreover the Turkish Republic's active role in negotiations between Somalia and Somaliland may trigger terrorist attacks.

The Turkish Republic's military actions can be another reason for al-Shabab terrorist attacks against the Turkish targets. Ankara has participated into efforts on establishing security in Somalia and regions near to the war-torn country. Since 2011, Ankara has provided military aid as well. Turkey commanded the Combined Task Force between the dates of 1 September-1 December 2010 in the Gulf of Aden, in the Indian Ocean and costs off Somalia.

Moreover, Ankara supports the United Nations Support Office for African Union Mission in Somali. According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Turkey is on the list of states providing "the highest amount of voluntary contribution to Somalia in addition to the regular contributions assessed by the UN".³

Turkey's military training base in Mogadishu is another crucial example. When opened it will be Turkey's first and biggest military

³ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey's Approach and Contributions to the United Nations Peace keeping Operations", http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-approach-and-contributions-to-the-united-nations-peacekeeping-operations.en.mfa, (Accessed on 03.04.2017).

training base in overseas. 200 Turkish military personnel will educate nearly 500 Somali troops every year in their mission against al-Shabab. Also through educating Somali soldiers it is aimed to improve security situation of the country. The base will include three military camps. Its location is also important due to the fact that it is close to airport in Mogadishu and the Port of Mogadishu.⁴

2. Turkey's African Involvement Since the End of the "Opening Era"

The foreign policies implemented and conducted by Turkey, provides ground for legitimization of the AK Party⁵ both domestically and internationally. Therefore, the Justice and Development Party has used various devices in its policy implementation such as the soft power. The term soft-power that is frequently mentioned by the government circles entails the argument that apart from hard issues such as security related subjects; "Turkey's diplomatic, economic, cultural and historical ties have importance in formulation of Turkey's foreign policy".⁶ If this definition is taken into account then it can be clearly said that with relying on soft-power devices the AK Party opened a new window for Turkey's Africa policy.

The number of official visits can clearly indicate this involvement to Africa. For instance, before the AK Party's coming to power only two official visits were conducted to sub-Saharan Africa: in 1969 then president Cevdet Sunay went to Ethiopia and in 1996 then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan visited Nigeria. However, by the figures of January 2013, there were 21 visits from Turkey to Africa on the level of president, prime minister and foreign minister. On the African side, 26 state visits were conducted.⁷ Later in January 2015 President Erdoğan visited Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti; in March

4 "Turkey Trains Somalis to Kill Al-Shabab", *The New Arab*, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/News/2017/3/20/Turkey-sends-aid-opens-biggest-military-base-abroad-in-Somalia>, 20 March 2017, (Accessed on 04.04.2017).

5 İlhan Uzgel, "DışPolitikada AKP: Stratejik Konumdan Stratejik Modele", İlhan Uzgel-Bülent Duru, eds., *AKP Kitabı: Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu*, Phoenix Yayınevi, Ankara 2009, s.358.

6 Uzgel, *op. cit.*, s. 359.

7 "What does PM Erdogan's visit to Gabon-Niger-Senegal tell us?", *Africa News*, http://www.africanews.com/site/list_message/44858, 21 January 2013, (Accessed on 19.06.2013).

2016 he visited Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, Gana and Guinea⁸. Recently in January 2017, he paid official visits to Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar however these last visits are different in nature due to the fact that they constitute first visits of a Turkish president.

One of the most underlined peculiarities of Turkey's rapprochement to Africa is that it dominantly rests on rhetorical power. Symbolic presentation is always made by the Turkish government to legitimize its African policy. This rhetoric focuses mostly on "win-win" claims, using of soft power device, reference to Ottoman past. By underlying the "win-win" claim, the Turkish administration has tried to convince Africa that bilateral relationship will be beneficial for both actors. However, persisting on highlighting "win-win" dimension indicates that in fact African states may have doubt concerning their bilateral relations with Turkey. For this reason the leaders of the AK Party and the members of cabinet have often emphasized Ankara's intent in this cooperation and historical dimensions of these relations. Henceforth, it is aimed to emphasize that there is no hidden agenda for the AK Party's opening to Africa.

In a way Turkish foreign policy on Somalia can illustrate the dichotomy present in Turkey's soft-power dilemma that centers on persisting in being an international actor despite political and economic shortcomings. Somalia, as for African politics, has significant importance that is not limited solely to the Continent. Due to its strategic location and its instability crisis, this war-torn country can disaffect the developments not only in Africa but also in its near regions. Taken granted this importance Turkey has been aware of the fact that its policies and steps towards Somalia can make her a prominent actor in international arena and can boost its visibility internally and externally. For instance during the 2011 crisis when Somalia could not get desired help from the UN Ankara took the lead for providing help and support. However, Ankara has limited capacity to have a role in Somalia's affairs. Due to the fact that Somalia's neighbours especially Kenya and Ethiopia have taken the lead in cooperative relations with Somalia not

⁸ For details regarding visit please look to: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri", <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-afrika-iliskileri.tr.mfa>, (Accessed on 19.06.2017).

only in economics but also in national reconciliation process as well. However; Turkey's religious approach and its reference to the Ottoman history hat constitute important parts of its soft-power, with the support of economic, military dimensions may facilitate its role in Somalia. For instance Turkey may want to spread her vision of Islam against Iran's penetration with using religious tool like building mosques that can be recognized as presenting "itself as a legitimate and authentic religious authority...opening to promote Turkey's vision of Islam as part of a functioning democratic state".⁹

One has to bear in mind that referring to religious devices to support Somalia is frequently used phenomenon especially by the Middle East states like in relations between Egypt and Somalia or between Saudi Arabia and Somalia. For instance Egypt's well-known and important religious institution Al-Azhar's influence on some of the Somalia's notorious political movements provided grounds for Turkey to use its own religious tools especially for spreading its vision of "moderate political Islam".

Thus one can assume that soft-power used in the AK Party's approach to Africa, encompasses the political dimension of bilateral relations and cooperation so that critics increasingly focus on soft power. One of the most common critiques is that the AK Party's foreign policy dominantly rests on soft power which can prevent elaboration of this policy according to strategic terms. In this dimension voluntary associations get most of critiques. They have been active in various dimensions and facilitated Turkey's penetration into Africa. These institutions as examples for soft-power; conduct health, education and sanitary campaigns that directly affect Africans' daily lives. At this point, soft power concept has been perceived and used as general framework for Turkish foreign policy and these non-governmental actors have been treated as essential actors for formulating and conducting this policy.

Another rhetorical aspect used frequently by the AK Party, has been the claim of pursuing a multi-dimensional foreign policy. Turkey's

9 Mubaraz Ahmed, "Why Would al-Shabaab Target Turkey?", *Religion and Geopolitics*, 18 December 2015, <http://www.religionandgeopolitics.org/turkey/why-would-al-shabaab-target-turkey>, (Accessed on 24.03.2017).

opening to Africa has been portrayed as the Party's diversification of its foreign policy or indication of multi-dimensional character of its foreign policy. However, this claim does not hide the fact that Ankara's involvement to Africa was launched with its own problems and issues. One issue is that such relationship has already its own limitations which sometimes result in questioning the AK Party's policies and rhetoric towards Africa because most importantly Turkey has lacked the necessary capacity and means to compete with Africa's other partner states especially with China. However Ankara has some peculiarities that China and other prominent actors of the international society lack: giving attention to proportionality in pursuing relations, soft-power, religion and usage of religious dimension. In terms of Somali politics, unlike China, Turkey has not been criticized for "prioritizing" her own interest, Ankara's approach towards Somalia has not been "visibly criticized as disproportionately benefiting Turkey".¹⁰ The AK Party, with its religious means, has tried to increase its relations with Africa's Muslim states. For this reason, through its soft power devices and Turkish civil society organizations Ankara has tried to improve its ties with Africa in health, education and construction areas.

This First Africa-Turkish Cooperation Summit of 2008 also entails some relevant points that can be used to evaluate Turkey's African policy. For instance, whether the documents "The Istanbul Declaration on Turkey-Africa Partnership: Solidarity and Partnership for a Common Future" and its annex "Framework of Cooperation for Turkey-Africa Partnership" adopted at the Summit, lead to improvement of bilateral relations still lacks clarity. To put it in another way, it is hard to say that this Summit opened new grounds for "win-win situation" for both actors. Also the Implementation Plan remains ambiguous whether it facilitates bilateral relations and cooperation. For instance in this declaration of 2008 there were no direct or concrete reference to Turkey's candidacy for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) membership for the 2009-2010 terms and no mentioning of Africans' support for Turkey's candidacy. Instead, in the document, it was solely mentioned that the UNSC had important role and responsibility to solve security problems.

10 Gizem Sucuoğlu-Jason Stearns, "Turkey in Somalia: Shifting Paradigms of Aid", *South African Institute of International Affairs*, Research Report, No: 24, November 2016, s. 32.

Moreover, it is estimated that the institutional mechanism prepared in the First Summit falls behind Ankara's agenda for intensifying cooperation like First High Level Officials Meeting of the Turkey-Africa Partnership that was held in Istanbul on 15 December 2010 in which "2010-2014 Turkey-Africa Partnership Joint Implementation Plan" was adopted. According to Birnur Fertekligil who was former deputy under secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Africa and Multilateral Foreign Affairs, "these initiatives have given a considerable momentum to" Turkey's African policy.¹¹ Furthermore First Ministerial Review Conference of the Turkey-Africa Partnership was took place in Istanbul in December 2011. The African turn out was actually high; fifty-three states were participated. But there was low level of political participation as 35 states were represented by the level of ministers. Nevertheless according to the Turkish officials, positive outcomes were reached at the Summit. They argued that in the Conference bilateral relations and steps taken since 2008 were elaborated and future projects were planned.

Turkey has continued on some strategic projects which can create framework of its bilateral relationship with Africa. The second summit of cooperation between Turkey and Africa can be given as an example.

3. African Dimension of "Win-Win" Relations: The Continent's Response

To make comments on success of the AK Party's foreign policy, African response has to be taken into account. Actually since the AK Party's acceleration of its African policy in 2005, the Continent has been ambiguous in answering those Turkish steps. Also Africa's interest towards Turkey develops slowly.¹² One reason may be Africa's lack of material and human resources. Nevertheless new and additional steps from Africa are needed to comment the AK Party's approach as successful.

11 "Opening Speech Delivered By H.E. Ambassador Birnur Fertekligil, Deputy Undersecretary Of The Ministry Of Foreign Affairs For Africa And Multilateral Political Affairs At The High Level Preparatory Meeting", *African Union*, 15 December 2011, pp. 1-5, <https://goo.gl/eiC8J4>, (Accessed on 17.01.2012).

12 Mehmet Özkan, "A New Actor or Passer-By? The Political Economy of Turkey's Engagement with Africa", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol: 147, No: 1, 2012, p. 121.

Africa has been aware of Turkey's steps and recently gives positive responses to Ankara.¹³ Put it differently, Africa recognizes the AK Party's moves as an opportunity that can be used for its development. For example, in 2009, during former President Abdullah Gül's visit to Kenya, former Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga said that bilateral relations constituted crucial and efficient factors to realize UN's Millennium Development Goals like halving extreme poverty rates for his country.

Especially after 2005, African states made some gestures. The first high-level visit from the African Union to Turkey was also took place in 2005 when Prof. Alpha Oumar Konare as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission visited Turkey. Furthermore in the same year, Turkey acquitted the status of observer member of the AU to participate to the Organization's ordinary sessions. In addition to this, the AU declared Turkey as its strategic partner in 2008.¹⁴

Furthermore, Turkey's relations with the Continent's crucial organizations are perceived as useful step to increase cooperation and used to support Turkish claims on the success of African policy. For instance Turkey became the 26th non-regional member of the African Development Bank in 2013-although it was expected in 2008, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2008. Moreover in 2005 Turkish Embassy in Abuja is accredited to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Turkish Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam is accredited to East African Community in 2010.

On the other hand the African Union has tried to implement some steps to complete and strengthen its relations with Turkey alongside its other strategic partners such as China, South Korea and the EU. According to the AU Summit's Decision on Africa's strategic partnership dated February 2013, it was mentioned that the needed and accurate steps have to be taken by the AU for preparing to the Second Cooperation Summit between Turkey and the AU. Furthermore it was

13 Mehmet Özkan, "Turkey's Rising Role in Africa", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol: 9, No: 4, Winter 2010, p. 98.

14 China, India and South Korea are other strategic partners of the continental organization.

recalled to implement six priority projects of Financial Road Map and provide information requested by the Turkish government.¹⁵

Africa also has been aware of certain missing points that can disaffect strengthening bilateral cooperation. To give as an example, then African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Ramtane Lamamra during the First Ministerial Meeting of the "Africa – Turkey Cooperation Summit" held in 2011 in Istanbul, acknowledged the fact that Turkey's approach to Africa did not solely center on economic and trade areas. In fact Lamamra acclaimed that Ankara's policy towards Africa had a comprehensive dimension that entailed fight against diseases, irrigation, energy and education, the maintenance of peace and stability in Africa.¹⁶ However it was also mentioned that both actors could achieve more if they would identify "some prioritized programmes and projects mutually agreed upon for implementing in short and medium terms".¹⁷ In other words African side knew that some deficiencies existed against strengthening this relationship even in the short and medium terms. According to John K. Shinkaiye who was the Chief of Staff to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and participated in the Opening Session of Senior Officials Meeting of the Africa–Turkey on behalf of the African Union Commission, application manner of the Joint Implementation Plan was very slow.¹⁸ "Innovative steps" were needed "to achieve concrete deliverables"¹⁹ in addition to the improvement of financial mechanism to implement these projects and strategies.

15 "AU Summit: Decision on Africa's strategic partner ships", *SAFPI: South African Foreign Policy Initiative*, 04 February 2013, <http://www.safpi.org/news/article/2013/au-summit-decision-africa-s-strategic-partnerships>, (Accessed on 15.02.2013).

16 "AUC Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra And Representative of H.E Dr. Jean Ping Chairperson Of The African Union Commission On The Occasion of the First Ministerial Meeting of the 'Africa-Turkey Cooperation Summit'", *African Union Commission*, 16 December 2011, Istanbul-Turkey, p. 3, <https://goo.gl/VMBXCd>, (Accessed on 18.01.2013).

17 *Ibid.*

18 "Remarks by Amb. John K. Shinkaiye Chief of Staff, Bureau of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the Occasion of the Opening Session of Senior Officials Meeting of the Africa-Turkey", *African Union Commission*, 15 December 2011, Istanbul-Turkey, p. 3, <https://goo.gl/a7J2p2>, (Accessed on 17.01.2013).

19 *Ibid.*

4. Still Opening to Africa or Strategic Partnership with Africa

Mid-2010s' developments on Turkish-African relations are evaluated to figure out the essence of Ankara's policy to the Continent. This period provides several facts to analyze Turkey's whole approach and to make comparisons between the opening era and the era of strategical partnership.

The most important and interesting development is convening of Second African-Turkish Cooperation Summit in 2014 in Equatorial Guinea. With the title of "A New Model for Partnership for Strengthening of Sustainable Development and Integration of Africa" it was meant to evoke the fact that the initial relationship or cooperation model had to change or was changed. 30 African states participated to the Summit in which economical and historical relations were elaborated. Education and health were highlighted as important areas for cooperation and meanwhile Turkey's financial aid to Africa would continue. Several decisions and declarations like the Joint Implementation Plan of Africa-Turkey Partnership 2015-2019 were accepted. Henceforth a new time table was set for a particular period of time and a framework regarding 2015-2019's relations was prepared. Especially development goals had utmost importance regarding strengthening the current framework. In 2019 third summit will be convened in Turkey.

According to the Turkish government circles, these developments represent successes which have to be supplemented with new goals. Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu acclaimed in 2014 that all goals accepted during the 2008's Turkey-African Cooperation Summit were realized so that Turkey's opening to Africa was successfully completed²⁰. These developments like adopting the Joint Implementation Plan can be recognized as crucial components that demonstrate institutionalization of bilateral relations and henceforth improvement of relations.

20 "Çavuşoğlu'nun Makalesi Afrika Basınında", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 17 November 2014, <http://aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cavusoglundun-makalesi-afrika-basininda/100791?amp=1>, (Accessed on 14.04.2017).

President Erdoğan's latest visits to the Continent are also efficient to show some details and new materials that further can be used to compare and contrast different terms of the AK Party's governance and African states' reactions as well. In January 2017; he paid official visits to Tanzania, Madagascar and Mozambique. These visits provide some important facts to reveal current phase of Ankara's engagement in Africa and so do the Continent's reactions. Foremost of all, they include first steps, examples regarding the AK Party's approachment. First time a Turkish president paid an official visit to Mozambique and Madagascar. Moreover, regarding the relations between Turkey and Madagascar this visit was a first official visit from Turkey.

Another premier point is that the AK Party uses these visits as an indication of new beginning of mutual relations. The Turkish Presidency recognizes these visits as an indication of Africa-Turkey partnership politics. To put it in another way, to Ankara, Turkey's African politics is transformed from the opening level to partnership level and that transformation is put into action by concrete steps.

Another first step, regarding the visits is Turkey's demand of cooperation in its fight against terrorism particularly FETO. Turkish schools/sect schools, entrepreneurship that had connections with the Gülen Movement, once a prominent factor in relations with Africa, now are included into spectrum of Turkey's fight against FETO. In presidential level, Ankara demands from African authorities to close or transfer these institutions to legal ones decided by Ankara and take some legal measures against the members of FETO, the persons affiliated or have connections with FETO. By revealing active presence of FETO members in Mozambique, for instance, Turkey directly indicates that it closely follows the situation on the ground.

Adding security dimension to this framework in which development of economic and political relations have been constant elements; indicates that separation of soft power-hard power will be valid in Turkey's relations towards Africa. It is expected and demanded from the African states to give a positive answer to this changing situation, to comfort with this new framework. In another words soft-power which has been common aspect of Turkey's engagement in Africa

will be supplemented with hard-power components like fight against terrorism.

To replace FETO and other related institutions the AK Party represents and highlights several official institutions. Some of them are familiar from the opening era like Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı*, TİKA) and the Foreign Economic Relations Board (*Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu*, DEİK). However nowadays they are officially presented to the African counterparts “the one and only” official institutions to make business with. TİKA as one of the crucial actor of Turkey’s opening to Africa process, now is decided as the highest institution in executing relations with the Continent. Opening of new office in Darrusselam during the January 2017 visit, revealing of goal to open an office in Madagascar can be recognized as one of the examples on presenting TİKA officially and transforming into more active institution. DEİK is represented as the official and legal institution to cooperate with against FETO’s trade activities and its trade entrepreneurship. Another new institution is the Maarif Foundation. It is demanded from the African states to transfer Turkish schools to this foundation.

Another important component characterizing these visits so do the bilateral relations is Ankara’s continuation of policies, actions from “the opening era” even in this so-called “strategic partnership” era. To give as an example main focusing point of these visits is economic cooperation. Like in his previous official visits a separate delegation of businessmen accompanied Erdoğan in his recent visit. Under the coordination of the Ministry of Economy and organization of DEİK this delegation made some consultations with African counterparts. Business forums were held in the capitals of three states. The opening area’s usual components like presenting Africa as a new market for Turkey and new opportunities for business also can be seen in Erdoğan’s latest visits. The Turkish government that has aimed to take the lead in relations with Africa has made comparisons with the Western world regarding those relations. Such comparison that was used in the opening area is used at the partnership era as well. For instance even today, Turkey’s no-colonial history is kept underscoring officially. So through these examples of ideological foreign policy

rhetoric Turkish government has wanted to indicate that it has had different approach on Africa when it is compared with Western states. In this context, one of the important dimensions of AK Party's approach to Africa is overemphasizing its Ottoman roots and Ottoman legacy in its rhetorical aspect. Because according to the government circles, such an emphasis on history facilitates to highlight differences between Turkey and her European counterparts. This comparison not only simplifies opening new opportunities but also gives Turkey the chance to indicate its non-colonial history. Henceforth ideology can be used to legitimate a foreign policy decision, action aim and a demand to international system²¹.

Furthermore, African dimension of "win-win" relation comes to the front. The opening era's most emphasized component, has been centered on Ankara's argument that it aims to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation. Also related with the "win-win equitation" Ankara has demanded from Africa to give positive and proportional replies. For instance, Ankara expects from Africa to open embassies in Turkey's capital.

How will Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar answer Turkey's demands? Demand on cooperation in fight against FETO, can be recognized as intervention into African states' internal affairs. Hence some states may slow down the process of transferring the schools and taking legal actions against persons related with FETO or may demand additional information from Ankara. In fact, the Continent's attitude regarding FETO does have no integrity; the policy is changing from one state to another. Somalia, Gine and Niger as conforming Turkey's political line transferred these schools. Kenya hasn't taken any action that will be appreciated by Ankara. Related documents were signed with several states like Chad, Sudan and Senegal. Ankara, for the short term, can focus on closing and transferring schools. Several media organs claim that FETO suspects have been in Mozambique and Madagascar. Several developments that may take place in Turkey, Greece and USA in its fight against FETO can affect Turkey's bilateral relations with

21 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Emre Ozan, "Dış Politikada İdeolojinin Rolü", *Dış Politika Analizinde Teorik Yaklaşımlar: Türk Dış Politikası Örneği*, Ertan Efeğil-Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, ed., Barış Kitap, Ankara 2012, p.371.

Africa on that matter. Demand of expulsion of some persons can come to the agenda or Ankara may demand to fasten precautions in Africa's fight against FETO.

Conclusion

The AK Party's active involvement in Africa can be attributed to three things. Firstly, the Party has claimed pursuing multi-dimensional foreign policy. The government circles have always mentioned that the AK Party's opening to Africa has a comprehensive dimension entailing several different headings like transportation, telecommunication, agriculture, peace and security. This character is also related with Ankara's aim of making differentiation between herself and leading actors of the international arena regarding policies towards Africa. According to the Turkish government such attitude would bring new opportunities in terms of intensifying bilateral relations. For instance one theme that is most underlined is Turkey's desire to make contributions to Africa's development as a part of "sustainable cooperation".

Secondly the AK Party has used Africa policy to indicate its claim of Turkey as becoming "a global actor" which is capable to formulate and implement policies regarding problems of instability. Also it has aimed to underline "signals of Turkey's taking steps in its transformation from regional powerhouse to global leader".²² Somalia policy can be given as an example. Thirdly, to deal with the international fiscal crisis, especially after 2009, Turkey chose Africa as an opportunity to overcome its negative effects. In fact economic dimension of Africa policy always surpasses other aspects of the AK Party's active involvement into the Continent.

In addition to this, the AK Party implies that it has a new approach on the Black Continent which focuses on the theme of "New Africa". This theme which relies more on sub-Saharan Africa actually aims to promote an image of Africa as a stable and peaceful place. To put it in another words, it shows that Ankara wants to change Turkish society's

22 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "11 Eylül Sonrası Türk Dış Politikasında Vizyon Arayışları ve 'Dört Tarz-ı Siyaset'", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, Cilt: 1, Sayı: 1, Kış 2007, p. 53.

perception on Africa as backward place so that the government can assure the continuation of bilateral relationship and cooperation²³.

To talk about "win-win" relation, it is crucial that Africa supports such relationship; it is needed that Africa takes some steps and maintains them. Opening of embassies, signing of free trade agreements, closing or transferring schools connected with FETO, African leaders' implementation of the map drawn by Ankara on bilateral relations are Turkey's expectations from the African states. Moreover, Turkey has to convince its African partners that Turkish-African relations are based upon "win-win" principles²⁴.

In spite of the AK Party's interest; its policy towards Africa has fallen short of its actual agenda/program since the opening era. This situation results in two questions that have to be replied to elaborate its policy towards Africa. First of all, do the AK Party's steps towards Africa represent an approach or a policy towards Africa? Rather than detailed and concrete policy, it will be more accurate to elaborate this renewal of relations as an approach whose continuation in the long run may result in adoption of concrete policy that will focus on intensification of a relationship and bilateral cooperation. Hence in the long run it will be answered whether Turkey's opening and strategic partnership to Africa constitute a part of detailed policy. If active involvement and concrete relations continue and Ankara gets its desired responses from Africa, then a detailed policy can be adopted. Put it differently this opening can be perceived as a new beginning, a new step for improved relations for both actors; and strategic era can be labeled as both continuation of opening and grounding this opening into a solid ground, fulfilling deficits. In this strategic era both old and new concepts, presentations and names are used so this newness can question whether it is still opening or strategic partnership era.

Second question is that whether Turkey-Africa relations will exist in the long run. Current phase of relationship may represent a short-

23 Özkan, *a.g.m.*, Winter 2010, p. 97.

24 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Ahmet Said Altın, "Türk Dış Politikasında Afrika: 'Osmanlı Mirası Üzerine Ortak Gelecek-Etkinlik Arayışları'", Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Ertan Efeğil, ed, *Türk Dış Politikasında Güvenlik Arayışları: "Temel Faktörler, Kavramlar, Aktörler, Süreç ve Gelişmeler"*, Barış Kitabevi, Ankara 2012, p. 234.

term approach conditioned by both external causes such as global fiscal crisis and internal causes such as presenting an image of Turkey as powerful actor in international politics. On the other hand the Turkish government has acclaimed that its policy concerning Africa has long term effects and would be part of a durable relationship. In this regard, strategic components of politics are referred to legitimize the steps and projects. For example, the Horn of Africa is represented as one of the most important strategic regions of the world in the future so that it was convenient to make investments and try to intensify relations.

Even in the process of strategic partnership, opening to Africa still continues: some first steps are taken, policies are implemented and furthermore several examples of discourse and policies from the opening era are still used. Can strategic partnership be founded on the opening and those first steps? And can such strategic partnership endure? Africa's responses mostly will affect the direction of strategic partnership and it is estimated that Ankara will closely watch rise or decline in bilateral relations. Erdoğan's 2017 visit indicates that new components are added to the Turkish-African relations, but also old patterns are remained and used. First official visits at the presidential level were made to Mozambique and Madagascar. In addition to this, Turkey comes up with strategic partnership program which is a new framework on conducting bilateral relations and presented it to Africa. Inclusion of Turkish schools within the measures of fighting against FETO indicates that at the political level it is passed from soft power to hard power and henceforth components regarding hard power are launched in the relations between Africa and Turkey. Within two years President Erdoğan visited 10 African states, made similar contacts in spite of this fact concerns and demands on fight against terrorism, cooperation in security were highlighted in his latest visit. In addition to this during his visits to Djibouti, Somalia and Ethiopia in the year of 2015, he mentioned his thoughts on schools and institutions with FETO connections to his African counterparts. During his February 2016 visit to Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Gine some first steps were taken as well: it was the first time that Turkish president paid an official visit to the Ivory Coast.

To sum up, the AK Party, compared to previous administrations, has done a lot to intensify relations between Turkey and African states. Not only political or strategic but also economic and social steps are taken to get desired response from Africa. The AK Party; by concluding agreements, convening international summits, official visits and giving scholarship to African students prepared framework of relations with Africa. Turkey's strategic moves such as overture to Somalia may help to materialize the AK Party's claim that Turkey will help Africa in various dimensions; not restricted solely to economic domains . Now it is time to continue these steps through real political moves like opening military training base. Because the AK Party's rapprochement towards Africa has been recognized as part of efforts that "reduce foreign policy directly to diplomacy"²⁵. For instance former Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stated Turkey's involvement in Africa constituted part of not only "rhythmic diplomacy" but also "serious and sustained development in the field of diplomacy"²⁶.

25 Uzgel, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

26 Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007", *Insight Turkey*, Vol: 10, No: 1, 2008, p. 82.

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