

Turkey-South Africa Relations: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Even though Turkey has a strong historical relationship with the Republic of South Africa dating back to the 19th century, its historical and political relations with the Republic of South Africa remained very limited since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. When the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in October 2002, the traditional dynamics of Turkish foreign policy changed significantly. The ruling party explored new political, economic and social instruments so as to increase its relations with South Africa. The AK Party has combined elements of constructivist and realist approaches in its foreign policy activism, focusing on restoring the damaged historical relations with African countries and strengthening economic and trade relations with them. This article argues that there is a mixture of motivations behind increasing the bilateral relations between the two states. Also, this research will focus on how geopolitical, geoeconomic and historical factors play an important role in the development of relations between the two countries.

Keywords: *Ottoman State, Turkey, South Africa, Turkish foreign policy, history, politics, economics, geopolitics.*

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Türkiye-Güney Afrika İlişkileri: Türk Dış Politikasındaki Değişen Dinamikler

Öz

Türkiye'nin Güney Afrika Cumhuriyeti ile 19. Yüzyıla dayanan güçlü ilişkileri bulunmasına rağmen, iki ülke arasındaki tarihi ve politik ilişkiler 1923 yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulması ile birlikte zayıflamaya başlamıştır. Kasım 2002'de iktidara gelen Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AK Parti) ile birlikte geleneksel Türk dış politikasının parametleri değişmeye başlamış ve buna paralel olarak Türkiye ve Güney Afrika Cumhuriyeti ilişkileri gelişme sürecine girmiştir. Bu araştırmaya göre, AK Parti ile birlikte Türk dış politikası hem yapısal hem de realist yaklaşıma uygun politikalar geliştirmeye başlamıştır. Diğer bir ifade ile Türk dış politikası, Cumhuriyetle birlikte ihmal edilen tarihi ilişkilerin onarılmasına ve ülkeler arasındaki ekonomik ilişkilerin geliştirilmesine yönelik stratejik adımlar atmaya başlamıştır. Bu makale son yıllarda ilişkileri artan bu iki ülke arasındaki stratejik ilişkilerin büyümesine neden olan sebepler üzerinde durmaktadır. Özellikle de iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin gelişmesinde önemli rol oynayan jeopolitik, jeoekonomik ve tarihi faktörlerin iki ülke ilişkilerine nasıl etki yaptığı üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Osmanlı Devleti, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Güney Afrika, dış politika, tarih, ekonomi, jeopolitik.*

1. Introduction

There has been a significant political, social, and economic transformation in both Turkey and South Africa over the last decade. Both countries have a significant position in world politics and whereas South Africa is the most developed African country on the continent Turkey is strategically located on the world stage. Both actors play active roles in resolving international problems and working together on a set of common global issues and challenges. South Africa is significantly important for Turkey in the opening of the Sub-Saharan region on the continent whilst Turkey is a gateway for South Africa to the opening of the countries in the regions of Asia and the Balkans. Furthermore, South Africa is the largest trading partner for Turkey in the Sub-Saharan region and Turkey is one of the largest trading partners for South Africa in Eastern Europe. Both countries have been sharing the same democratic issues and experiences throughout history, and from 2005 the nature of their relationship has changed as both countries developed their bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation. This article will first examine the transformation of Turkish foreign policy, then scrutinise the historical relations with South Africa dating back to the 19th century. It is important to emphasise that the AK Party has adopted a new strategic doctrine to redefine the strategic location of Turkey and strengthen historical relations with countries in Africa with which the Ottoman State had deep political, economic, security and social ties. In this respect, the transformation of Turkish foreign policy can be explained with two important concepts: geographical depth and historical depth. The last section of the research will examine the current development of the bilateral relations between Turkey and South Africa.

2. Transformation in Turkish Foreign Policy

With the establishment of the new republic in 1923, Turkey's policy towards the legacy of the Ottoman State changed radically. The Ottoman legacy was seen as a burden rather than a strategic asset by the Kemalist foreign policy makers. The main aim in the first years of the republic was to build a new state and a new society with a new identity. Westernization and secularization characterised the first years of Turkey, playing a significant role on the emergence of negative perceptions of the past.¹ The Islamic

¹ Yucel Bozdaglioglu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, New York and London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 5-7.

identity of the Ottoman State was seen as the main obstacle to the process, therefore one of the most significant aims of the Kemalist ideology was to remove it.² History was not used as a strategic component of the TFP by the Kemalist elite so that the parameters were not defined in accordance with the social, religious or cultural fabric of the Turkish nation. The exclusion of the Ottoman legacy from the new secular state decreased the effectiveness of the TFP in global politics, leading to the emergence of a dilemma and identity crisis and dividing the Turkish society into “Kemalist” and “Islamist”.³

After the AK Party came to power in 2002, the dynamics of the TFP changed significantly. TFP began to include the legacy of the Ottoman State as one of the most strategic assets to expand the sphere of influence of Turkey in world politics. In this regard, the nature of the relations between Africa and Turkey has undergone a significant change under the ruling party. For instance, while Turkey only had 12 embassies across the African continent prior to 2002 it now has 39. The AK party opened new embassies in Africa where the Ottoman State had a special historical, political, economic and military relationship. While the total volume of trade was about 2 billion dollars with the whole Africa prior in 2002, it is today about 20 billion dollars.⁴ The AK Party combined elements of constructivist and realist approaches in its foreign policy activism, focusing on restoring the damaged historical relations with those countries that had a deep relationship with the Ottoman State, and strengthening economic and trade relations. The conservative identity of the ruling party paved the way for a revitalization of the Ottoman legacy as an important component of TFP.⁵

The then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, had been one of the most important figures in changing the traditional parameters of the TFP. Having served as a chief foreign policy advisor to the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan between 2002 and 2009, in May 2009 he was appointed foreign minister of Turkey by the ruling party.

² Ibid.

³ Philip Robins, “Turkish Foreign Policy since 2002: Between a ‘Post-Islamist’ Government and a Kemalist State”, *International Affairs*, 83 (2), 2007, pp. 289-304.

⁴ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Turkey-Africa Relations”, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa> (accessed on 23 April 2017).

⁵ AK Party, *Political Vision of AK Party 2013: Politics, Society and the World*, Ankara: AK Party, 2012, pp. 8-10.

His book “*Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position*” became influential in changing the dynamics of traditional TFP during the period of the AK Party governments. Davutoglu developed the theory of strategic depth, which has three important characteristic features: (a) zero-problem policy: Turkey should aim to resolve crises in the neighbourhood through diplomacy and develop good relations with its neighbours; (b) pro-active diplomacy: Turkey should aim to play a more active role in resolving conflicts and stopping wars in the neighbourhood and beyond; and (c) multidimensional policy: Turkey should develop good relations with the newly configured regions and continents,⁶ including the emerging actors, such as China, Brazil, India and Africa, and diversify its foreign policy mechanisms to decrease its dependence on the West. Turkey can only be a central power by using the advantages of its history and geopolitics. It failed to use the legacy of the Ottoman State as a strategic asset for increasing the power of TFP during the Cold War era, and therefore remained peripheral in this period, merely an instrument of the Western powers to protect their strategic interests.

The theory of strategic depth has two important foundations. Firstly, historical depth was established on the heritage of the Ottoman State, enabling power in world politics to be used with the combination of other power parameters. It posits that Turkey can restore and strengthen its historical, political, economic and cultural relations with the former Ottoman territories. Secondly, geographical depth gives the country a natural opportunity to expand its sphere of influence in world politics, criticizing the passive, secularist, nationalist and Western oriented policies, which Kemalist elites pursued by excluding the Balkans, Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia and Africa. The theory posits that Turkey should develop a multidimensional rather than one-dimensional foreign policy in order to protect its national interests, and identifies three important strategies: (i) land basins, such as the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East; (ii) maritime basins, consisting of the Black Sea, Caspian, Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf of Basra; and (iii) continental basins, namely Asia, Europe and Africa. According to the strategic depth theory, Turkey needs to redefine its geographic and historic identity and reassess its regional and international position.⁷ It has already begun to play a more

⁶ Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007,” *Insight Turkey* 10(1), 2008, pp. 79-83.

⁷ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Turkiye’nin Uluslararası Konumu*, Istanbul: Kure Yayinlari, 2001,

active role in mediating conflicts between different factions, including Israel-Syria, the Israel-Palestine, and the West-Iran. It has also increased its strategic relations with the new global actors, including China, India, Brazil, Russia, and Africa.

Kalin argues that the transformation of the Turkish foreign policy with three factors: political and economic changes in Turkey; the establishment of new goals and principles or the changes in the strategic mind-set on the development of Turkish foreign policy; and the creation of the new instruments and mechanisms of foreign policy.⁸ Turkey changed its traditional foreign policy with the AK Party, from following a Western-centred foreign policy that restricted development of bilateral relations with the neighbouring countries of Turkey and important actors on the different regions and continents of the world. During the Cold War, Turkey was considered a military ally by the USA and Europe but has since redefined its geostrategic location and explored new political, economic and social mechanisms to increase bilateral relations with different actors in world politics. It has diversified its foreign policy under the leadership of President Erdogan.

3. The Legacy of the Ottoman State in South Africa

Examining the legacy of the Ottoman State in South Africa is crucial to understanding the changing relations between Turkey and South Africa. It falls into three categories: the life of the Ottoman scholar Abu Bakr Effendi; the impact of Pan-Islamism; and the Ottoman Consulates in South Africa. The legacy of Islamic scholar Abu Bakr Effendi in South Africa played the most significant role in establishing strong historical relations. Muslims of South Africa requested an Islamic scholar to teach and guide them in the fields of Islamic education from the Ottoman State through the British Empire. Distinguished Ottoman Kurdish scholar Abu Bakr Effendi was appointed as a religious guide to South Africa by the 32nd sultan of the Ottoman State, Abdulaziz, in September 1862.⁹

pp. 65-90.

⁸ Ibrahim Kalin, "Turkish Foreign Policy: Framework, Values, and Mechanisms", *International Journal*, 67 (1), 2011-12, pp. 7-21.

⁹ S Argun, *Life and Contribution of Osmanli Scholar, Abu Bakr Effendi, towards Islamic thought and Culture in South Africa*, unpublished MA dissertation. Johannesburg: Johannesburg University, 2000, pp. 15-18.

The South African Muslims could not preserve their religion, culture and identity due to prohibition on performing their religion publicly. They began to misuse and misinterpret the religion over time, due to lack of Islamic education, causing many problems and disagreements on religious matters. Despite the ban the Cape Muslims were strongly attached to their religion.¹⁰ As a well-trained scholar in Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic sciences, Abu Bakr Effendi opened schools for girls and boys separately to educate them according to the principles of Islam and taught and preached the adults in the evenings.¹¹ Abu Bakr Effendi also had a tremendous impact on the cultural life of the Cape Muslims; for instance, the Muslims in the Cape began to use the Ottoman traditional hat, the Fez.¹²

His children became actively involved in Islamic activities and prominent actors in the Cape after his death. For instance, his eldest son Achmed Ataullah Effendi was appointed as Ottoman Consul-General to Singapore by the sultan Abdulhamid in 1901. He also served as a principal of the Ottoman Hamidiye School in South Africa in 1884. The Ottoman State opened Muslim schools in the Cape, Durban, Kimberley and Port Elizabeth, known as the “Hamidiye schools”.¹³ Abu Bakr Effendi’s Islamic activities played a significant role in strengthening the Islamic identity of the Muslims of South Africa. The increasing relations between the Ottoman State and Britain in the second half of the 19th century enhanced political and religious relations between the Ottoman State and South Africa. The leadership role of the Ottoman State in the Islamic world in the 19th century became the most important driving factor for increasing political, social, cultural and religious ties with South Africa.¹⁴

Sultan Abdulhamid (1878-1909) actively used the policy of pan-Islamism to strengthen the Ottoman State in the world politics. Particularly, the institution of the caliphate used by the Ottoman sultans played a significant role in expanding the influence of the Ottoman State and protecting and uniting the Muslims around the world. The South African

¹⁰ Serhat Orakçı, *A Historical Analysis of the Emerging Links between the Ottoman Empire and South Africa between 1861-1923*, unpublished MA dissertation. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg, 2007, p. 35.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Argun, *Life and Contribution of Osmanli Scholar, Abu Bakr Effendi, towards Islamic thought and Culture in South Africa*, p. 27.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Orakçı, *A Historical Analysis of the Emerging Links between the Ottoman Empire and South Africa between 1861-1923*, p. 48.

Muslims perceived the Ottoman State as the leader of the Islamic world and saw it as the protector of the Muslims in the world. The policy of the pan-Islamism of the Ottoman State implemented by Sultan Abdulhamid played a significant role in limiting the colonial power of Britain in Southern Africa. Sultan Abdulhamid also sent a military observer to South Africa for the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) in February 1900.¹⁵

The construction of the Hamidia Hijaz Railway (1900-1908) was a strategic step implemented Sultan Abdulhamid II for expanding the idea of pan-Islamism.¹⁶ The South African Muslims provided financial assistance for the project and established fund raising commissions to collect money for it. During the construction of the railway, the son of Abu Bakr Effendi Hisham Nimetullah Effendi played an active role on the establishment of the fund raising commissions for the project.¹⁷ Sultan Abdulhamid II awarded him a medal for his efforts and South African Muslims collected around 366.551 pounds between 1900 and 1907 to contribute to the project.¹⁸

The Cape Muslims began to celebrate the birthdays of the Ottoman sultans in 1867 and mentioned the names of the sultans at the Friday celebrations in the mosques across the country. The Ottoman sultans also provided financial assistance for building mosques in South Africa, including the one in Port Elizabeth. Meanwhile, the Muslims in South Africa were active participants in the Ottoman army fighting Italy during the Tripoli War in 1911, sending 17.634 lira and 875 pounds to support the Ottoman State during the Turkish War of liberation (1919-22).¹⁹

The Ottoman State also protected the interests of the South African Muslims and expanded its influence to South Africa by establishing consulates. It firstly appointed British and German officials as honorary consuls. It opened the first Ottoman Consulate in 1861 in Cape Town, with the British official Mosyo de Roubaix filling this post for his constructive relations with the South African Muslims. The consulates worked actively until the collapse of the Ottoman State in 1923.²⁰ In 1890, German Henri

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Argun, *Life and Contribution of Osmanli Scholar, Abu Bakr Effendi, towards Islamic thought and Culture in South Africa*, p. 61.

²⁰ Ibid.

Bettelheim was appointed honorary consul to Johannesburg, and in 1910, an Armenian Ottoman citizen Ohannes Medjakian Effendi became consul in Johannesburg. Meanwhile, a consulate opened in Durban. In 1914, Mehmet Remzi Bey was appointed as the first Turkish diplomat to the post of the Ottoman Consul-General in Johannesburg in 1914. However, the Ottoman Consular Office was closed and his activities blocked by Britain with the emergence of the First World War. He died on 14 February 1916 and was buried in Johannesburg.²¹

The South African Muslims had a strong loyalty to the caliphs and sultans of the Ottoman State in history. They saw the Ottoman Empire as the leader of the Islamic world and the protector of the interests of the Muslims around the world. Religious ties were the driving factor in establishing political relations with South Africa in the second half of the 19th century. The policy of pan-Islamism implemented by the Sultan Abdulhamid II became effective in increasing political and religious relations with South Africa and influencing the prestige and power of the Ottoman State against Britain in South Africa. There had been continuity in the foreign policy of the Ottoman State towards South Africa but when the new republic was established it waned. Particularly, with the abolishing of the institution of the caliphate, Turkey lost its leadership role in the Islamic world and the South African Muslims were disappointed with the changing identity.

4. Relations between Turkey and South Africa (1990-2000)

At the end of the Cold War era, the two countries took concrete steps to develop their bilateral relations. The first official relationship was established between Turkey and South Africa in 1989. The apartheid South Africa opened its African Trade Centre (ATC) in Istanbul and on 12 August 1991 both countries upgraded their diplomatic relations, with the apartheid regime upgrading the ATC to consul-general in Istanbul and Turkey reciprocating in Johannesburg. On 12 October 1991, the two countries upgraded their diplomatic relations from the level of consul-generals to the ambassadorial level. While South Africa appointed General CF Neels Jaco as ambassador to Turkey, Turkey appointed Sami Onaran to Pretoria as ambassador.²² The apartheid regime intended to develop diplomatic and commercial relations with Turkey because it was facing

²¹ Ibid.

²² Tom Weeler, *Turkey and South Africa: Development of Relations 1860-2005*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), 2005, p. 35.

stringent international economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation and loss of its international reputation in world politics.

Ozal had a vision to develop a diversified foreign policy and strengthen relations with the neighbours and beyond. Importantly, he took a keen interest in changing the statist view of Turkey in world politics and increasing its trade relations with the neighbours and strategic actors. He implemented a significant number of market-oriented economic reforms and revitalised a neo-liberal economy in the country. Turkey had undergone significant political and economic transformation from an inward-centred economic programme to an export-centred economic orientation.²³ There were two reasons to increase diplomatic and trade relations between Turkey and South Africa after the Cold-War era. The first was that Ozal adopted an export-oriented foreign policy which forced Turkey to open new market alternatives with different actors in the world. The second was that Turkey needed to find cleaner and cheaper coal because of pollution during the 1990s. South Africa was rich in natural resources, including clean coal.²⁴

Table 1: Turkey's Trade with South Africa (1996-2004) (Million \$)

Year	Export	import	Total
1996	65 516	210 211	275 727
1997	71 204	183 259	254 463
1998	72 912	152 480	225 392
1999	58 964	123 626	182 590
2000	71 049	171 810	242 859
2001	77 871	345 028	422 899
2002	87 644	211 027	298 671
2003	121 528	335 713	457 241
2004	190 113	1 006 683	1 196 796

Source: (Turkiye Istatistik Kurumu)²⁵

²³ Ziya Onis, "Turgut Ozal and His Economic Legacy: Turkish Neo-Liberalism in Critical Perspective", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40 (4), 2004, pp. 113-134.

²⁴ Ali Kemal Aydin, "Turkey and South Africa: Towards the Second Decade", *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, VIII (IV), 2003, pp. 1-5.

²⁵ Turkiye Istatistik Kurumu. n.d. "Dis Ticaret", <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist> (accessed on 13 March 2015).

The total trade of Turkey with South Africa was 275 million dollars in 1996. The intensity of economic relations remained at a low level until 2003. As shown in Table 1, while Turkey's exports to South Africa was 58 million dollars in 1999, its imports were 123 million dollars. In that year, the Turkish coalition government was facing political, economic and social challenges. Particularly, political instabilities in Turkey in the 1990s damaged the development of economic and trade relations with South Africa.²⁶ The total trade between the both countries did not exceed 300 million dollars between 1996 and 2002.

There had been three important issues influencing and affecting the bilateral relations between Turkey and South Africa in the post-Cold War era.²⁷ The first was that Turkey could not predict the political transformation taking place in South Africa. On 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and the apartheid regime was also collapsing. The first general democratic elections were held in the country on 27 April 1994, a turning point in bringing a just and transparent political system to the country. With the elections of 1994, the black majority gained equal voting rights with the white minority. Mandela established its first democratically elected government on 10 May 1994 and remained in power until 14 June 1999. The government reduced the number of its embassies in the world, including Turkey.²⁸ Weeler points out that the Mandela government particularly preferred to increase its diplomatic relations with the countries that had supported the liberation struggle of the African National Congress Party (ANC) during the apartheid regime.²⁹

The second issue was that Turkey had a strong relationship with the apartheid regime in the military field before 1994. The Mandela Government stopped selling weapons to Turkey and froze all existing military agreements. The National Conventional Arms Control Committee of South Africa in 1997 released a report on Turkey stating that South Africa should first observe the development of human rights in Turkey and considered the balance of power in the region in which Turkey was located.

²⁶ Mehmet Ozkan, "What Drives Turkey's Involvement in Africa?", *Review of African Political Economy*, 37 (126), 2010, pp. 533-540.

²⁷ Muhammed Haron, "South Africa and Turkey in an Era of Globalization: Constructing a Relationship, Crafting a Partnership", Paper presented at the conference organized by Kirklareli University, Turkey, 2011, pp. 1-18.

²⁸ Weeler, *Turkey and South Africa: Development of Relations 1860-2005*, p. 16.

²⁹ Haron, "South Africa and Turkey in an Era of Globalization: Constructing a Relationship, Crafting a Partnership", pp. 1-18.

South Africa considered Turkey an invader power in global politics, due to its policy over Cyprus in 1974. For this reason, Turkey put South Africa on her “red list” which forbade developing her military relations with countries on the list. These issues particularly affected negatively the development of relations between the two countries during the period of 1994-2000.³⁰

The third issue was the Kurdish issue, directly influencing relations between the two countries during the Mandela government. Mandela refused taking the Ataturk Peace Prize given by the Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel in 1991. Weeler attributes this to some prominent members of the PKK terrorist organization, who had contacts with the important members of the ANC in Europe, and the supporters of PKK lobbying against Turkey.³¹ Mandela was sensitive to the issues of human rights because of the legacy of racist policies of the apartheid regime in the country. Having been the victim of a racist regime, he gave priority to the issues of human rights on the foreign policy activism of South Africa. Developing human rights standard became one of the most important objectives of the South Africa’s foreign policy during the Mandela Administration.³² According to Landsberg, he was the “father of the culture of human rights and the rule of law in South Africa”. Mandela became a role model on the peaceful transition in both South Africa and in the world. When he and his ANC party came to power in April 1994, Mandela particularly adopted a pro-human rights foreign policy³³, becoming an active figure in resolving international crises and human rights issues in the world. For instance, he was actively involved in an attempted resolution of the crises in the Middle East and Africa.³⁴

According to Mandela, without resolving political and human rights crises in the conflict areas in the different parts of the world, including the issues of Palestine, Kashmir, Nepal, and different African countries, South Africa would not be free totally. Even though Mandela did not have any prejudices against Turkey, the sensitive relations between some prominent members of PKK and ANC paralysed the bilateral relations. PKK particularly aimed to contact the prominent members of the ANC,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² N. Mandela, “South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (5), 1993, pp. 86-97.

³³ C. Landsberg, “Nelson Mandela: The Legacy of a Political Luminary”, University of Johannesburg, 2015, pp. 1-3.

³⁴ Ibid.

including Mandela, for the purpose of justification of the activities of PKK in Turkey and abroad.³⁵ While PKK strategically achieved its aims, Turkey failed to develop an active foreign policy to refute the political discourse of PKK in South Africa. It is important to highlight that PKK began to develop its strategic relations as soon as the ANC came to power in 1994 and filled the strategic gap to convince the ANC elite and used the opportunity of the fact that Turkey's foreign policy was very passive and ineffective. Turkey was facing huge political, economic and social crises during the period between 1994 and 1999. Therefore, PKK strategically found a strategic opportunity to explain its political discourses to the ANC elites and other countries in the world, including European countries and the USA.

The rejection of the highly respected award Atatürk Peace Award by Mandela, the arms embargo on Turkey imposed by the black South African Government, and the closure of the South African Embassy in Ankara, were significant evidences that PKK had influence on the ANC elite in South Africa. Turkey could not explain its political and international discourse abroad actively and failed to create an active lobbying mechanism to refute the political discourse of PKK in the world. It can be said that political, social and economic crises in Turkey had a significant potential to paralyze the relations between Turkey and Africa in general and South Africa in particular. According to the PKK terrorist organization, PKK shared the same identity with the ANC because the black majority fought a liberation struggle against the racist government in South Africa similar to that waged by PKK in Turkey. However, the most important distinction between the ANC and PKK is that while the latter committed atrocities to achieve its goals in Turkey, the ANC never killed civilians in the country, except attacks on strategic state locations such as nuclear energy sites and telecommunications stations. The PKK terrorist organization killed more than 30 thousand civilians in Turkey following the conflict started in 1980.

Oppression, exclusion and discrimination were the typical characteristics of the apartheid regime, with non-whites in South Africa strictly deprived of political representation and denied social and economic rights. The apartheid regime even banned the marriage between the white race and the black race and created the system of 'homelands' or 'Bantustans', which separated living space. It was an obligation to carry a passbook to enter white territories, usually only for the purpose

³⁵ Weeler, *Turkey and South Africa: Development of Relations 1860-2005*, p. 27.

of work. Between 1960 and 1970, the apartheid regime implemented a grand apartheid policy against the black population, forcing them to leave white areas. There was the official racist regime in South Africa officially established when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948 and remained in power until 1994. On the other hand, when Turkey was established in 1923, the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) focused on nationalist and secularist policies for the endorsement of the nation-building or Turkish nationalism. The main problem was that the CHP worked to implement this policy with a degree of intensity. However, the party of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, created a new Turkish identity, but it failed to create a 'rainbow nation' which aimed to include all the ethnic groups in the country. Both countries preserved a strong security identity.³⁶ While the apartheid regime focused on the establishment of an Afrikaner identity by using the hard power and excluding the majority of the society, the Kemalist regime put too much emphasis on the building of a Turkish identity³⁷, using hard power and excluding the majority of the nation.

The political and economic relations between Turkey and South Africa remained very limited after the 1990s. The members of the PKK terrorist organization played an influential role in undermining political and economic relations between Turkey and South Africa. Turkey failed to develop a constructive foreign policy towards South Africa due to the fact that Turkey faced a number of significant economic and political crises during those years.

5. The Current Relations between Turkey and South Africa (2002-present)

After the 2000s, the nature of the relations between the two countries underwent a significant change. Both Turkey and South Africa have taken significant steps to increase their bilateral relations over the last decade. There are a number of significant reasons behind the growing relations between the two actors. Firstly, a new political leadership emerged in both countries. Secondly, both changed their traditional foreign policies and adopted trade-oriented ones. While Thabo Mbeki came to power in 1999 after Mandela, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took power in Turkey in 2002.

³⁶ Haron, "South Africa and Turkey in an Era of Globalization: Constructing a Relationship, Crafting a Partnership", Paper presented at the conference organized by Kırklareli University, Turkey, 2011, pp. 1-18.

³⁷ Ibid.

Both leaders were keen on developing diplomatic and trade relations with the neighbours and the strategic actors in global politics. Both actors increased the number of their diplomatic representations around the world. In October 2003, Jacop Zuma, the then Deputy President, made an official visit to Turkey with a large delegation, the first high-level official visit organized by the South African authorities after the post-Cold War era. On 24-26 May 2010, Kgalema Motlanthe, the then Deputy President of South Africa, paid an official visit to Turkey to develop bilateral relations. During the visit, both countries signed a memorandum of understanding on diplomatic cooperation.³⁸

While the Mandela government focused on domestic challenges such as job creation, economic growth, inequalities and issues of the African continent, Mbeki dealt with the continental and global issues more ambitiously. He particularly aimed at developing a more dynamic and active foreign policy for South Africa and making the country a global player on the international stage. For instance, Mbeki preferred to play an active role in developing a macro-economic policy for his country, and developing a multilateral foreign policy became a strategic priority. Landsberg stresses that the directives of the foreign policy of South Africa did not change significantly after Jacob Zuma took power in 2009, but rather he followed similar foreign policy orientations, including increasing the South-South and the North-South partnerships developed and implemented by his predecessor.³⁹

On 3-5 March 2005, President Erdogan paid an official visit to South Africa with a large delegation, creating a new dynamic environment for developing bilateral relations comprehensively. The negative perception of South Africa towards Turkey changed after 2000. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa, Aziz Pahad, made official statements on the foreign relations with Turkey just before the visit of Turkish President Erdogan to South Africa, and mentioned that all the problems regarding the arms deal had been resolved by diplomatic means. He also explained that the issue of the Kurds in Turkey was related to the

³⁸ Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, "Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe concludes official visit to Turkey", <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?reid=1902>, 2010. (accessed on 03 March 2015)

³⁹ Ibid.

dynamics of the Middle East, so that it could only be resolved if there was a comprehensive approach.⁴⁰

During the official visit of Erdogan to South Africa in March 2005, three important agreements were signed by the countries, namely the Agreement on Double Taxation, the Customs Agreement, and the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement.⁴¹ Furthermore, a joint Economic Commission was also established by the parties to develop trade and economic cooperation.⁴² Erdogan made his second official visit to South Africa on 3-5 October in 2011 with both countries signing a joint declaration.⁴³

Turkey's economic relations with Africa significantly changed after the AK Party came to power in 2002. High-level visits, building up strategic partnerships, the establishment of business councils, the opening of the new embassies and the cultural missions, removing visas, and the strengthening of bilateral relations played a substantial role in changing the nature of the trade and economic relations between Turkey and Africa. It can be said that the ruling party aimed to expand the scope of the trade-oriented foreign policy which Turgut Ozal developed. Kardas points out that one of the most important priorities of the new Turkish foreign policy is to increase economic relations with different actors, to create new markets for Turkish business and develop an export-oriented foreign policy.⁴⁴ Turkey developed a new strategic culture to increase its soft power in world politics, based on the development of economic relations with different regions and continents. Turkey became the 17th largest economic power in the world and the 6th largest in Europe, therefore defined as a trading state by some analysts.⁴⁵ In this regard, increasing economic relations with South Africa has been one of the most strategic foreign policy objectives for the AK Party governments.

⁴⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs, "Official visit to South Africa by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan", <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/2005/paha0302.htm>, 2005. (accessed on 22 March 2015)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Department of Foreign Affairs, "Media Statement on Official Visit to the Republic of South Africa", <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2005/turk0303a.htm>, 2005. (accessed 07 March 2015)

⁴³ Independent Online, "Erdogan visits SA to further spread trade wings", <http://www.iol.co.za/business/news/erdogan-visits-sa-to-further-spread-trade-wings-1.1151502#.VQxBBXneaM8>, 2011. (accessed on 15 March 2015)

⁴⁴ Saban Kardas, "Charting the New Turkish Foreign Policy", *International Journal*, 67 (1), 2011-12, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁵ Kemal Kirisci, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 40, 2009, pp. 29-57.

After the failed military coup of July 2016, Turkey has redefined its foreign policy priorities towards Africa. Fighting against the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) has been one of the most important foreign policy strategies across the African continent for the ruling party. In this regard, Turkey has been increasing its diplomatic relations with South Africa in order to close down the FETO's schools in this country since July 2016. On the other hand, the FETO has a strong network in South Africa through its educational activities, civil society organizations and business connections. At the same time, the FETO has a strong relationship with the South African government. It can be said that South Africa is the most important country for the FETO within the African continent because of its economic power and its geostrategic importance on the continent and in the world. FETO's strong political relations with the South African government have been a significant obstacle for Turkey in order to close down the FETO schools across the country. How could Turkey become successful against the FETO in South Africa and have a strong relationship with South Africa? Turkey needs to increase its diplomatic and political relations with the South African government at the highest level. Turkey's diplomatic missions in South Africa should play a more active role in explaining the FETO's objectives in Turkey and in the world.

In parallel with the increasing relations between the two countries since 2005, Turkey opened Yunus Emre Cultural Centre in 2013 in order to strengthen cultural relations between the two countries. Furthermore, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) has been active in this country in recent years. For instance, TIKA renovated a number of significant Ottoman works including the cemetery where the Ottoman Islamic scholar Abu Bakr Effendi was buried in Cape Town, the Ottoman cricket club in Cape Town, and the Nur-ul Hamidiye Mosque established by the Ottoman State in 1884.⁴⁶ TIKA is also planning to open a branch in Cape Town in the near future. It can be said that Turkey has not only developed a constructivist approach towards its relations with South Africa but also aimed to deepen its economic relations. The Islamic identity of the ruling party has been a critical role in developing the historical relations with South Africa.

⁴⁶ TIKA. "TIKA Baskani Dr. Serdar Cam Guncay Afrika'da", http://www.tika.gov.tr/tr/haber/tika_baskani_dr_serdar_cam_guncay_afrika%27da-32587 (27 April 2017).

Table 2: Turkey's Trade with South Africa (2005-2016) (Million \$)

Year	Export	Import	Total
2005	315 739	1 259 978	1 575 717
2006	598 489	1 793 113	2 391 602
2007	653 785	2 172 298	2 826 083
2008	1 238 632	1 502 492	2 741 124
2009	866 774	1 103 313	1 970 087
2010	369 235	889 635	1 258 870
2011	510 523	1 954 586	2 465 109
2012	381 772	1 289 821	1 671 593
2013	619 718	1 479 338	2 099 056
2014	545 275	1 189 352	1 734 627
2015	489 162	918 541	1 407 703
2016	405 953	1 058 114	1 464 067

Source: (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu).⁴⁷

The total trade of Turkey with South Africa reached up one billion dollars in 2004 for the first time. While Turkey's export to South Africa was 1.238 billion dollars in 2008, its import reached to 1.500 billion dollars in the same year. 2008 became the most successful year, with the level of economic relations between the two countries reaching the highest point of 2,741 billion dollars. The total trade of Turkey with South Africa would not fall below one billion dollars between 2004 and 2014. South Africa is the most important trading partners for Turkey in the region of the Sub-Saharan.

6. Conclusion

Turkey has a deep historical relationship with South Africa dating back to the 19th century. The legacy of Abubakr Effendi in South Africa was significant in understanding the level of solid historical relations between the two countries. Historical relations between the two countries were cut off after a new secular state was established in Turkey in 1923. The new state concentrated on the establishment of a new secular identity; therefore

⁴⁷ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. n.d. "Dis Ticaret", <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist> (accessed on 13 March 2015).

it put too much effort on the creation of a new Turkish identity rather than keeping the relations with the legacy of the Ottoman State. South Africa also has very complicated history. The apartheid regime was racist and excluded the majority from political, economic and social rights of the state. It also aimed to create a new Afrikaner identity but the difference between the nationalist and secularist Turkey and apartheid regime was that while the later officially established a racist state the former put too much emphasis on the creation of a secular identity. Both countries implemented their undemocratic policies so as to build up a new identity by using hard power or security and excluding the other elements in the society.

Turkey's relations with South Africa were problematic during the Mandela government, in that the Kurdish issue paralyzed bilateral relations. Particularly, Turkey's weak political and economic structure in world politics led to the emergence of a passive and ineffective foreign policy activism in the post-Cold War era. The leader of Turkey in the 1980s, Turgut Ozal, tended to shift Turkish foreign policy from a Western-oriented foreign policy to a trade-oriented foreign policy. Hence, Turkey took important steps to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the apartheid regime, but failed to see the changing political dynamics in South Africa after its collapse. After 2000, the nature of the relations between Turkey and South Africa changed because of the emergence of the new leadership and the new foreign policy orientation of the respective countries. The AK Party under the leadership of Erdogan played the most important role in changing bilateral relations with South Africa.⁴⁸ The level of economic and political relations shifted after 2000. This research found that the ruling AK Party expanded the scope of the trade-oriented foreign policy which Turgut Ozal developed.

The global identity of the leader of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, was also a key figure in developing relations with Turkey. Both countries have significant interests on the continuation of the bilateral relations and are strategically important countries in world politics. They play a dynamic role in resolving regional and international issues. It is important to emphasize that South Africa is Turkey's largest trading partner in the region of the Sub-Sahara. Likewise, Turkey is the largest trading partner of South Africa in the region. It is necessary to deepen historical, diplomatic and commercial relations with South Africa. South Africa is among the

⁴⁸ Abdurrahim Siradag, "The Making of the New Turkish Foreign and Security Policy towards Africa: the Rationale, Roots and Dynamics", *Africa Insight*, 43(1), 2013, p. 14.

most developed countries on the African continent and a gateway to the Southern African region for Turkey, therefore, continuity in Turkish foreign policy is necessary to maintain political and economic relations with South Africa. In order to reduce the power of the FETO over the continent, Turkey needs to work with Turkish business circles, Turkish NGOs and Turkish academic circles more actively. Without cooperating with different non-governmental organizations, Turkey would have many challenges while fighting against the FETO over the African continent.

Turkey has gradually increased its diplomatic and trade relations with South Africa. Turkish students and academicians should often visit South Africa to learn the local languages of South Africa. The students of the respective countries should learn the socio-cultural and political and economic dynamics of the respective countries. There is a lack of specialists who will be able to shape and strengthen the relations of the both countries. Therefore, the respective countries should pay special attention to educating specialists who will study historical, political and economic dynamics of the countries.

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