

УДК 341.23=111

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**ASSESSING TURKEY'S DEVELOPMENT AID POLICY  
TOWARDS AFRICA: A CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE  
(ОЦЕНКА РАЗРАБОТКИ ПОЛИТИКИ ПОМОЩИ  
ТУРЦИИ В ОТНОШЕНИИ АФРИКИ:  
КОНСТРУКТИВИСТСКАЯ ТОЧКА ЗРЕНИЯ)**

*Introduction*

Like China, India and Brazil, Turkey, has discretely developed its links with Sub-Saharan Africa, and is now becoming a major player in the region. This is especially the case since the coming to power of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in 2002. The year 2005 was declared as the “*Year of Africa*” by the Turkish Government, and Turkey was accorded observer status by the African Union the same year. In 2008 the first ever Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit was held in Istanbul with the participation of representatives from 50 African countries; Turkey was simultaneously declared as a strategic partner at the tenth African Union summit held in January 2008. Bilateral diplomatic representations are increasing (in 2013 a total of 30 Turkish embassies are open in sub-Saharan Africa) and there is also a significant increase in the number of high level reciprocal visits between Turkey and African countries, the most recent visits include Gabon, Niger and Senegal (2013) [36].

Despite the fact that Turkey has been an aid recipient country for more than a half century from Western world, it started its own aid activities under the coordination of State Planning Organization in 1985 (Ertürk

2014). These were more coordinated since the establishment of TİKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) in 1992 and Turkey has delivered its development assistance, humanitarian aid and technical projects to Africa, Asia and Europe (Balkans) through this autonomous organization operating under the the department of Prime Minister Özkan 2013a). In the African context, Turkey's aid has dramatically increased in the last decade. For instance, Africa had a share of 24 percent from Turkey's official development assistance in 2013 – which represents an amount of 782 million USD. When we look at the figures for last five years, this represents a big increase (it was 31 million USD in 2007, 52 million USD in 2008, 47 million USD in 2009, 38 million USD in 2010, 269 million USD in 2011 and 750 million USD in 2012 [36]).

On the other hand, the current Turkish government underlines that its Africa's opening depends on historical and cultural roots. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website says, "*Being an Afro-Eurasian State, Turkey's policy of opening up to Africa is not just the reflection of a transient political and economic expectation. On the contrary, it is the product of a process with strong historical and cultural aspects. It is, foremost, the expansion and natural result of the firm feelings of friendship and partnership between Turkish and African peoples*" [36]. Regarding these Turkish ambitions to present itself as a distinctive partner in the African continent, we ask whether Turkey's development aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa can be explained from a constructivist perspective or in other terms. And what are the constructivist roots of Turkey's African policy at the discursive level, in particular? By looking at Turkey's African policy through the lenses of constructivism, we, secondly, try to assess whether this newly "constructed" African policy of Turkey through a three level discourse has achieved success on the ground despite its limitations and the challenges that Turkey has experienced in recent years.

The extensive research literature written on the development assistance policy of emerging African partners mostly focused on China, India and some countries of Latin America. That said, there is a scientific

vacuum on the issue of Turkey's development aid policy in Africa region and most specifically in SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa) which is new and therefore lacking in theoretical and empirical research that would help us grasp the significance of the Turkish development aid model. This article aims to reduce this scientific vacuum and proposes that a constructivist theory perspective may substantially contribute to our understanding of Turkey's role as a development aid provider in SSA.

The research is divided into *three parts*. The *first part* focuses on the theoretical analysis of Turkey's development aid in Africa from a constructivist view. In *the second part*, we will elaborate the foreign policy discourses of Turkey on the African Continent on the basis of three layered discourse. The *third part* will critically and empirically analyze Turkey's development aid policy toward Africa.

*1. Theorizing Turkey's Development Aid Policy:  
A Constructivist Perspective*

Constructivists use the process of identity construction to describe the behavior of actors and their policies in the international arena. Their focus on identity construction is designed to transcend what has traditionally been posited as a mutually exclusive dichotomy between ideational and instrumentalist dynamics: the point is to understand how actors' interest-based strategies are socially formed by longer-term values.

Alexander Wendt states that the international system is created and recreated in processes of interaction and therefore, it is this inter-subjective rather than material aspect of structures which influences behavior. Social-constructivist approaches assume that a country's foreign policy agenda is not only shaped by material, but also essentially by immaterial factors such as ideas, role identities, norms, and values. Wendt says, "interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is" (A Wendt 1992: 231), which in turn depends on their social relationships (Ron Jepperson et al 1996: 59).

Therefore, identities become crucial in constructivist analysis because they provide the basis for interests: “*Actors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations*” (Wendt 1992: 398). If the identities of actors are the basis of their interests, then, how do they acquire those identities? How would they define ‘self’ and ‘other’? In order to explain identity construction, Wendt makes a distinction between the corporate and social identities of states. In this case, “Corporate identity refers to the intrinsic, self-organizing qualities that constitute actor individuality” (Wendt 1994: 385). This type of identity generates four basic interests: (1) physical security, (2) predictability in relationships to the world, (3) recognition as an actor by others, and (4) economic development (Wendt 1994: 385). How each state satisfies these corporate interests, “depends on how it defines the self in relation to the other, which is a function of social identities at both domestic and systemic levels of analysis” (Wendt 1994: 385). A social identity (or role identity) on the other hand, is defined as, “a set of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object”(Wendt 1994: 385). While actors have one corporate identity, they usually have several social identities. Social identities enable actors to determine ‘who they are’ in a situation and exist only in relation to others. According to Wendt, interests and identities of actors emerge only in an interactive process. In short, constructivism regards international relations as norm-governed and state interests as constructed through a “fluid and interactive process of identity formation” which leads to “particular norms coming to be seen as appropriate, that is genuinely embedded in belief systems rather than adhered to for merely instrumental reasons.” (Youngs 2001: 6)

Coming to Turkey’s case, Turkish society and politics have gone through tremendous transformations in the last two decades, under the impact of both domestic and outside forces. The country’s foreign policy has shifted its course from a monolithic Western orientation during the Cold

War years to multiregional connections, after the Cold War. As part of ongoing multidimensional foreign policy changes in recent years, there has been, since 1998, a revival in Turkey's relations with SSA. In this process of opening to the African continent, Turkey has used historical relations and religious ties to define its own identity that will shape its foreign policy towards SSA. In fact, the geopolitical discourse of Davutoglu (the former Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Primer Minister) and AK Party can be defined as civilizational geopolitics, as they consider culture, religion and civilisation as the main determinants of World politics (Pinar Bilgin and Ali Bilgiç 2011). Davutoğlu's dominant geopolitical perspective is formed through a holistic civilizational understanding that sees Turkish/Muslim/Ottoman interaction as important parts of Turkey's strategic depth. Historically, the Turks' relations with Africa go back centuries (Murat Yeşiltaş & Ali Balcı 2013 : 28). Some African countries such as Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, the Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and even Niger and Chad were totally or partially components of the Ottoman State. During the wave of colonialism, the Ottoman State competed with the Portuguese in Eastern Africa and with Spain in North Africa for power and influence. In northern sub-Saharan Africa, the Ottomans were part of the balance of power system, having friendship and alliance with the Kanem Burnu Empire that prevailed in todays northern Nigeria, Niger and Chad (Mehmet Özkan 2008).

In addition, the main theme of the 5th Annual Ambassadors Conference in 2012, "Humanitarian Diplomacy" (HD hereafter), was an expression of Turkey's position in the international politics. HD, in Turkey's perspective, is meant to be a vision beyond humanitarian aid, aiming at developing "a new language of diplomacy in policy areas related to the future of the whole of humankind" (Ahmet Davutoğlu 2013 :866). In the final declaration of the conference, the following reason was given for selecting this theme<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> The conference is one of the most important events for Turkey's foreign policy, being held with the participation of all ambassadors, it functions as a platform to discuss and determine

*“Humanitarian diplomacy reflects the compassionate and competent character of the Republic of Turkey and depicts the human oriented nature of our foreign policy which merges our interests with our values. Turkish foreign policy takes human dignity as a point of reference and remains determined to use all its means and capabilities in this direction. In this regard and in light of the historical transformation taking place in our immediate neighborhood, the deliberations in the Conference has confirmed the need for Turkey to continue to implement humanitarian diplomacy in an effective and decisive way in a broad geography stretching from Syria to Afghanistan and Myanmar to Somalia in the forthcoming period. ... It was also confirmed that Turkey cannot be indifferent to the developments taking place in the southern and northern basins of the Mediterranean, with which it enjoys special ties stemming from history.”*

In his inaugural speech, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu defined humanitarian diplomacy as a constitutive part of the vision suggested by Turkey, which stemmed from political values embodied by Turkey in global politics. Relying on historical traditions and the cultural heritage of the country, HD is an essential expression of Turkey’s role, identity and quest for justice in international politics. The three dimensions of Turkey’s HD policies toward citizens of Turkey, policies toward crisis zones regardless of geographical proximity and policies concerning structures of global order, are representations of such framing of Turkey’s role in the global transformation of international politics (Ahmet Davutoğlu 2013). To illustrate this point, Turkey conducted humanitarian diplomacy in Somalia at the height of the famine in August 2011<sup>1</sup>.

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the main strategies of Turkey in global politics. See final declaration of the conference: [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/final\\_declaration\\_of\\_the\\_fifth\\_annual\\_ambassadors\\_conference.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/final_declaration_of_the_fifth_annual_ambassadors_conference.en.mfa).

<sup>1</sup> Twenty years after a civil war ripped apart the Somali nation, leading to the collapse of Siad Barre’s government - the last official government of the country until 2012 – Somalia was home to one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has ever seen, with up to 12 million people facing starvation.

Furthermore, Turkey seems to have well recognized African countries' expectations for getting their voice heard on international platforms. Thus, in the recently held high-level meetings such as the World Summit on Food Security (Rome, November 2009) and G-20 meetings in London and Pittsburgh, Turkey, in consultation with African nations, put priority on addressing many of the issues promoted by African leaders. In the same manner, in his visit to Cameroon in March 2010, former President Gul declared that the world has moral and political responsibility to African nations, and Turkey will be the voice of Africa in international institutions (NTV 2010). In actuality, however, Turkey is only assuming this role to a limited extent: experts repeatedly point to the passive behaviour of Turkey in various international forums.

In a constructivist sense, Turkey has developed in the minds of Africans, especially the Muslim countries, an image of a fellow Muslim nation that cares about their future due to its shared historical and religious ties. Therefore African leaders assign a specific role to Turkey on international politics and expect the latter to perform its foreign policy toward the African continent according with this role prescription. Turkey's foreign policy in SSA will then be judged according to the concrete role performed by Turkey. On this point, it seems that African leaders have generally positive perceptions of the Turkish-Africa cooperation and Turkey is getting their support in international instances. In illustration, all African countries but two voted in favor of Turkey to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2009–2010. That African leaders has a positive perception of Turkey's development assistance activities in SSA is particularly clear in the Somali case. For instance, Somali Foreign Minister states, "*When we had famine, nobody listened to us, nobody came to us in order to help. (Turkey's) Prime Minister (Recep Tayyip Erdogan) with his family and cabinet, brought us that help which uplifted us. It was such a change for the Somali people which we will never forget... We are very grateful.*" [37].

Similarly, Mohamed Nour, the Mayor of Mogadishu, Somalia, in September 2013 when he was asked about Turkish aid to Somalia said, “*If I request computers from the UN, they will take months and require a number of assessments. They will spend \$50,000 to give me \$7,000 of equipment. If I request computers from Turkey, they will show up next week*” (Kyle Westaway 2013).

In sum, Turkey’s development aid policy in SSA is in direct reference to the historical, cultural and political values that are believed to identify Turkey. Humanitarian assistance has been defined as a natural and indispensable part of Turkey’s identity, rooted in a long historical tradition, which is viewed as paving the way for the foundation of a new global order by reviving the long-forgotten legacy of Turkish identity.

## *2. Turkey’s Foreign Policy Discourses on the Sub-Saharan African Continent*

Alongside trade, investment, education and health services and charity work, development assistance is just one part of the broader African policy created by government, NGOs and business community (Aras 2013). Clearly, this multidimensional approach requires diversification of political language in use. As much as it seems the sign of Turkey’s growing influence in global politics on its own right, humanitarian and development aids need to be broadly analysed in terms of discourse construction. It can be argued that the combination of national interest and humanistic dimension constitute Turkish aid policy to African countries who have been benefiting from Western development assistance for years. Here it must be reminded that there are emerging non-Western donors in the global development regime. And regarding this rising global development assistance trend, Turkey’s experience is not unique but in line with this growing trend in world politics (Kardaş 2013).

One way to understand Turkey’s foreign policy discourse regarding its African policy in general and its development aid policy towards this continent in particular, is to take domestic and international dynamics into



account together. While the current AKP government tries to persuade Turkish public not to oppose such foreign expenditures, it also searches for legitimate reasoning for its activism in international arena. In this respect, the construction of Turkish foreign policy discourse has three different tracks supporting each other: The first track is *the humanitarian discourse*, generally exploited by government representatives presenting Turkey as a distinctive rising power with benevolent characteristics. The second track is *the anti-colonial discourse* referring the ‘clean’ history of Turkey. The third track is ‘*Rising Power*’ slogan and *Turkey-as-a rising power or emerging middle power discourse* fuelled by regional and international opening processes and it addresses both domestic and international politics. All these three pillars help to establish the image of Turkey as a rising benevolent power/partner with humanistic intentions at both rhetorical and practical levels.

Notwithstanding the earlier assumption of geographical division between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey’s new African outlook aims to contain the whole continent (Özkan 2012). Alongside the presence of geographical integration of Africa in mind, several Turkish foreign policy discourses still address African countries on the ground with respect to their political, cultural and economic differences.

### *2.1. Rise of “Humanitarian” discourse through Turkey’s humanitarian diplomacy*

Turkey’s rising capacity to affect international politics enabled the creation of a new foreign policy discourse called as *humanitarian diplomacy* that was introduced by Ahmet Davutoğlu, current Prime Minister and former foreign minister of Turkey. Whilst stressing the critical equilibrium of material power and conscience, he argued that if either of them is missing, the result will be either cruelty or weakness (Davutoğlu 2013). He underlined three dimensions of Turkey’s humanitarian diplomacy, which refer to – citizens of Turkey, policies toward crisis zones and global world order (Davutoğlu 2013). It is important to bear in mind that all these dimensions

and power-conscience relations are directly tied with the proactive foreign policy of Turkey in the last decade.

Trade, investment and free flow of human sources need institutional and practical assistance which can be provided by many ways including embassies, consulates and direct flights. Davutoğlu's emphasis on non-governmental organizations and the business world, as much as on state institutions, reflects the multidimensional aspect of changing foreign policy. Crisis zones represent second pillar of humanitarian diplomacy and capacity-test for Turkey as well. In this sense, peace and stability promotion in Somalia is the biggest challenge for Turkey. It is directly related to Turkey's position in Africa. Turkey's political role in Africa, like the USA or France, is in part dependent on the success of these kinds of attempts. Otherwise Turkey continues as an economic actor in the region like India, Brazil and China (Özkan 2013b).

Turkish humanitarianism is also underpinned by a combination of historical and religious discourses. Within this multilateral character of Turkey's development and humanitarian aid policy, the way religious discourses have been constructed by the policies of Turkish religious foundations in Africa can be assessed. In addition to state institutions like the Presidency of Religious Affairs, non-state Islamic solidarity movements such as IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation), Kimse Yok Mu, Cansuyu etc, and religious communities (Gülen movement, Süleymancılar, the Hüdayi foundation etc) generally work on various fields including education, health, social and infrastructural projects (Ozkan 2013b).

In this regard, it seems clear that religion appears as an important aspect of Turkey's African policy despite the fact that there is no religious homogeneity among African people. There are several religious meetings hosted by Diyanet including "Meeting of Muslim Religious Leaders in the Continent of Africa" in 2011. Religion-based discourse embedded Turkey's humanitarianism approach can easily be seen in, Erdogan's, President of Republics statement about the non-colonial past of Muslim

countries in the ‘First Latin American Countries Muslim Leaders Summit’ in 2014:

*“The religion of Islam was never used as a tool for exploitation, creating colonies and enslavement. While others used religion to exploit and force people to bow to themselves Muslims and Islamic states strived to inform people about Allah, win the hearts and souls and elevate the name of the Almighty. Muslims strived for good deeds and not quantity. They struggled for introducing Islam to more and more souls.” (Diyamet 2014)*

Humanitarian diplomacy is a unique concept associated with political distinctiveness, humanitarianism, religious references, mutual benefit and history. From this perspective, humanitarian diplomacy is instrumental to legitimize Turkey’s new foreign policy which enhances Turkish standing in the region through mediation and development aid programs.

## *2.2. Anti- Colonial Discourse and Its Limitations*

Like China and India, the motives of Turkey’s opening in the African continent is still not clear in the minds of Africans (Özkan 2010). Regarding the colonial legacy factor, Turkish officials underline the distinctive character of its involvement in Africa, which can easily be distinguished from that of other external actors’ in Africa, and try to build an image that Turkey has never had, and will have, imperialistic intentions in Africa (Aras 2013). In this regard, an anti-colonial stance, historical references, and political commonalities are prominent components of Turkey’s new African discourse.

Turkish officials have built an anti-colonial discourse which gives Turkey a clean identity, and prompts anti-Western language as well. It is aimed to avoid a negative perception that Turkey exploits African weakness to enter its markets (Aras 2013). In illustration, when Erdogan addressed the parliament of Gabon, he recognized the role of Western dominance as the main cause of the continent’s underdevelopment and remarked with pleasure that, *“Contrary to others, we see our common*

*history, we see only friends and brothers when we look at Africa,”* (Today’s Zaman 2013)

To stress Turkey’s non-colonial past, historical references are given to underpin the image of cleanness. Despite limited political relationship with Africa in both Ottoman and post-1923 Republican period, new Turkish discourse depicts Turks as friends who fought against colonialism with Africans (Bilgiç and Nascimento 2014). Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu who is the current foreign minister underlined historical solidarity between Africans and Turks, says:

*“Turkey has never been in a colonial position or relationship with the Continent. On the contrary, African nations looked for help from Ottomans in their struggle against colonial oppressors. Furthermore, it is known that our War of Independence which we fought close to a century ago under the able leadership of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, has had a strong influence on the African peoples in their struggle for liberation and independence. Echoes of this past have been heard all along when the Turkish Navy was making port visits in 24 African nations”* (New Vision 2014)

From the perspective of anti-colonialism, Turkey also faces some challenges. Turkish officials and other actors generally want to be considered as Europeans, but when it comes to Africa, they forgot their European identity (Bacık and Afacan 2013). Forgetting and recalling political and social identities is one part of discourse construction. Keeping Turkey’s membership process of the European Union for more than 40 years in mind, it is clear that Turkey searches for full-membership of that club. Furthermore, pro-Western stance of Turkey during the Cold War years confirmed Turkey’s historical position in international politics.

To some extent anti-colonial discourse can help to consolidate the legitimacy of Turkey’s image, but it also carries some risks as seen clearly in the deterioration of Turkey-France relations just after the vote of French law forbidding denial of Armenian genocide in the French Parliament.

When Erdogan targeted France for a colonial bloody history of its own for what France did in Algeria and Rwanda, Algerian prime minister criticized his counterpart for capitalizing Algerian blood (*Today's Zaman* 2012).

Despite Turkish leaders' strong emphasis on anti-colonialism discourse, as seen clearly in official development assistance records, traditional Western donors still represent major sources of development assistance in Africa (Kardaş 2013). Moreover, due to their different colonial backgrounds, the countries in Africa constitute their own way of thinking and decision-making about anti-colonialism (Ozkan 2008). This also how Turkish anti-colonialist discourse is problematic and does not fit very well the realities of the African continent.

### *2.3. Turkey as-a-Rising-country discourse*

Rising development aid performance of Turkey in the last decade demonstrates ambitious foreign policy ideals such as 'new Turkey' or 'Turkey as a rising power' – which started to be used frequently by Turkish decision-makers' in official discourses and, lesser so, in Turkish academia and media. If the economic growth constitutes the material dimension of this 'new' discourse, development and humanitarian aid is the symbolic component (because Turkey was a country who received Western development aid for years). In 2013, Turkey became the third most generous country after the USA and the UK in humanitarian aid statistics and it reached the first rank (*Global Humanitarian Assistance Report* 2014) in terms of GNI (Gross National Income). Of course, the government officials refer to these indicators while constructing their political discourses on "New Turkey" and "Rising Power" both inside and outside the country (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2014).

In domestic realm, such activism in Africa and other parts of the world is seen as the clear indicator of Turkey's rise in global politics, and having reputable position in the eyes of developing countries. 'Rising power' or 'New Turkey' mottos address many Turks who are actually dissatisfied with Turkey's past status in world affairs which has long been

economically and, to a lesser extent, politically dependent on Western countries. For them, Turkey's proactive foreign policy illustrates the end of passive stance toward international politics. Former president Abdullah Gul depicted Africa as the mirror that reflects Turkey's rising status.

*“Turkey once had to borrow from foreigners; now we are offering loans to African states.” (Bacık and Afacan 2013)*

It is true that Turkey has some special advantages in Africa, and this continent became a symbolic arena where Turks show their might to Europeans (Bacık and Afacan 2013). In terms of political and economic rapprochement between Turkey and Africa, it can also be argued that most of the European powers acting in Africa do not want that their economic and strategic presence jeopardized by the growing presence of other countries. (Uchehara 2008). Ahmet Davutoğlu also stressed the inter-state competition between Turkey and France in North Africa.

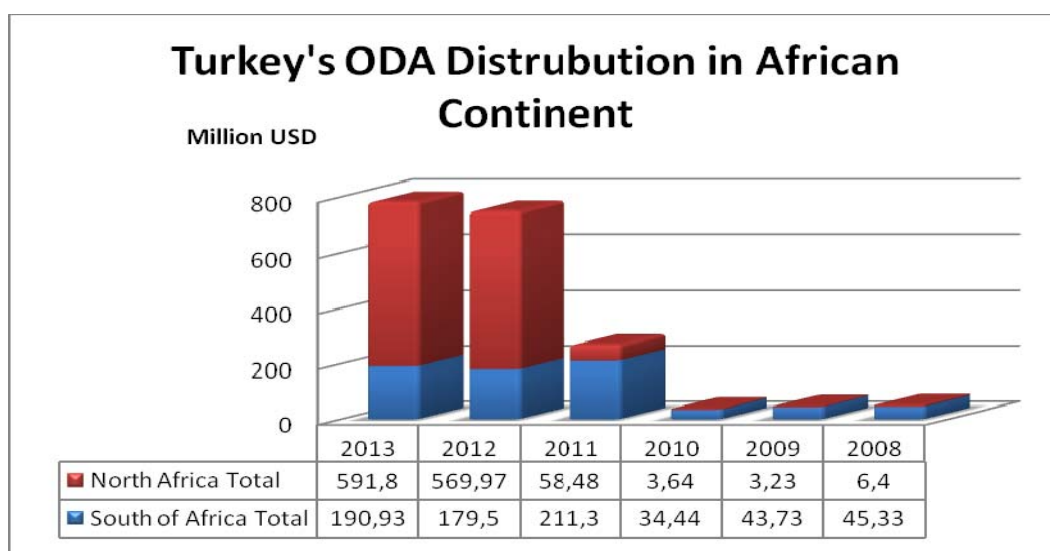
*“We have to deal with our neighbouring countries and even go to Africa. The superpowers are watching this in bewilderment. France tries to understand why we are working in Africa. I have already given an instruction: Wherever Sarkozy goes, he must see the building of the Turkish embassy and whenever he looks up he must see the Turkish flag. I have already instructed that offices be rented for embassies in the best places.” (News.Az 2009)*

Despite its willingness to become a rising political and economic player in Africa, Turkey's capabilities are limited to stability provision, aid and dialog facilitation in the region (Aras 2013). Turkey, nevertheless, has been trying to construct a new discourse towards Africa based upon its soft power with the aim of extending its influence both in African continent and in the wider world. (Wheeler 2011)

### *3. Turkey's Development Aid Policy Towards Africa in Focus*

Even if Turkey tries to create an 'one Africa' image erasing all geographical, religious, ethnic and other differences, ODA flows illustrates

selectiveness of Turkish foreign policy. The majority of Turkey's African assistance went to Sub-Saharan Africa before 2012 (2011: 211 million US dollars). In the last two years, the share increased to Northern Africa, and declined proportionally to Sub-Saharan's countries. The reason behind this is the special agreement between Turkey and Egypt in 2012.

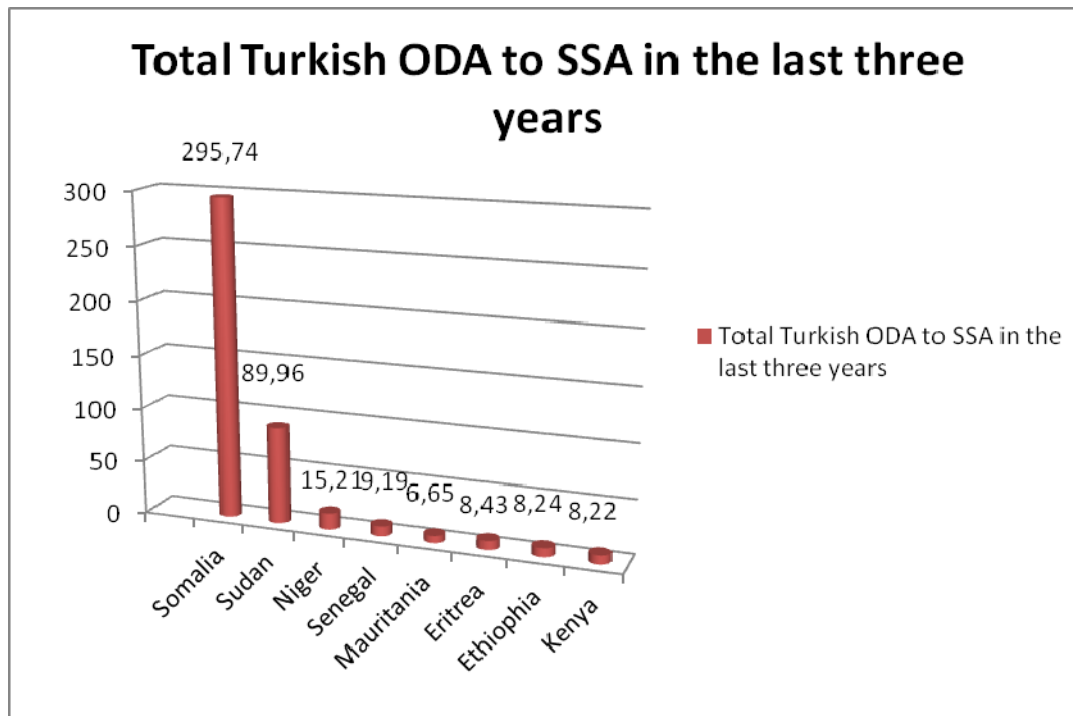


*Figure 1: Regional Distribution of ODA in Africa (Source: OECD)*

In line with its foreign policy activism in the Middle East, Turkish government signed a protocol with Egyptian Ministry of Finance to provide a loan of up to 1 billion USD to Egypt and as a result the first tranche of 500 million USD of the loan was given to this country in 2012 and the second tranche of 500 million of the loan was accorded in 2013 (*TIKA Turkish Development Assistance Report 2013*). Figure two above clearly shows how the aid accorded to the North Africa increased after 2011. Nevertheless, the proportion of Sub-Saharan Africa in the total aid flows to the Africa remained almost stable after 2010.

All 51 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (with the exception of five island countries) received ODA funds from Turkey in 2013; however it must be reminded that most of these countries received a low amount of aid (under 500,000 US dollars) (OECD Stat 2013<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2013): Dataset: aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions [DAC2a]; online: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=TABLE2A> (accessed 16 Oct. 2013).



**Figure 2: Total Amount of Turkish ODA to Africa in the Last Three Years**  
(Source: OECD Statistics 2013)

As seen clearly in the figure three, Turkey's development aid policy in Sub-Saharan Africa follows a constructivist perspective, which argues that the foreign policy of each state is defined by their identity and the ideas that are constructed through interactions with other states. In this sense, it is noticeable in the distribution of the Turkish funds went to Muslim-majority countries, which were in the realm of influence of the Ottoman Empire and / or have close ethno-cultural connections to Turkey (Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and even Niger and Chad). This argument has been proved right as seen clearly in the distribution of Turkish ODA to Africa in the last three years. The figure three indicates that the most significant Sub-Saharan African aid-recipient countries in the last three years were Somalia (295,740,000 Million USD), Sudan (89,960,000 Million USD), Niger (15,210,000 Million USD), and Senegal (9,190,000 Million USD). More specifically, the two largest recipients were the Muslim majority countries: Somalia and Sudan.



In addition to that, most of these aid-recipient countries are located in the horn of Africa, except Senegal, Niger and to a certain extent Mauritania. Indeed, Turkey has increased its involvement in the Horn of Africa, presumably due to its geographical proximity, its high Muslim population, and historical Ottoman era ties. Somalia is an interesting example in this regard. In August 2011, at the height of the most recent hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa, then Prime Minister, current President of Republics Erdoğan was the first non-African Head of State to visit Somalia in nearly 20 years. Following the visit, the embassy in Mogadishu was re-opened; 250 million US dollars in emergency aid were pledged; support in the military sector (for the training of military personnel) was approved, various development projects (primarily in the infrastructure sector) were launched and a TİKA Coordination Office was opened (Aynte 2012 [2]). In his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2011, Erdoğan emphatically pointed out the failure of the international community in Somalia and called for stronger international efforts. An amount of over 365 million US dollars was collected in Turkish private donations for Somalia in the same year; in 2012 the government gave over 1,200 full scholarships to Somalis to study in Turkey (Harte 2012, 28 [10, p. 27–38]). Turkey then held the II Istanbul Somalia Conference in mid-2012. Turkish Airlines now has direct flights to Mogadishu several times per week and the Nile Foundation has opened the first Turkish secondary school in Somalia. Somalia is a clear example of how development cooperation fits into the larger framework of Turkey's foreign policy, which comprises economic, military and cultural cooperation as well as political support.

Lastly, the horn of Africa is prioritized by the Turkish government and TİKA agencies, the main institution through which official aid channelled to Africa. TİKA until recently maintained three offices in Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Dakar. In 2011, it opened offices in Mogadishu and in 2012 in Nairobi. These offices function mostly as regional bureaus for supervising projects in surrounding countries (Mehmet Ozkan 2013:47).

### *Conclusion*

Since the arrival of the AKP in power in 2002, Turkey-Africa relations have incorporated economic, political, social and cultural plans. In the sphere of development assistance, Turkey's development aid to the African continent has dramatically increased in the last decade. For instance, Africa had a share of 31 percent from Turkey's official development assistance in 2012 which represents an amount of 772 million USD. It is worth mentioning that the majority of Turkey's African assistance went to Sub-Saharan Africa before 2012 (2011: approximately 211 million US dollars for Sub-Saharan Africa against 59,480,000 million US dollars for North Africa).

Turkey has constructed several policy discourses to support and legitimate its extensive development aid projects in Africa. These policy discourses are mostly related to humanitarian diplomacy, anti-colonial stances and Turkey's global rising. The concept of humanitarian diplomacy has been used by Ahmet Davutoglu to boost Turkey's active involvement in humanitarian crisis zones like Somalia. The anti-colonial discourses are used to present Turkey as a distinct donor without colonial past and imperialistic ambitions in Africa and to distinguish Turks from other (Western) major powers in their relations towards the African continent. Turkey's activism in Africa can also be seen as a clear sign of Turkey's ambitions to acquire global status, expand its sphere of influence and to rival the EU – especially France known as the strongest opponent of Turkey's membership to the EU.

Theoretically, Turkey's development cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa can be explained from a constructivist approach because it has been mostly established on the basis of cultural, historical and religious ties. These cultural, religious and historical roots of Turkey's development aid policy to SSA explain why the Muslim-majority countries especially with those having past ties with the Ottoman Empire (Somali, Sudan, Ethiopia, Niger) are the largest recipients of Turkish aid assistance. From a

constructivist perspective, Turkey has tried to develop in the minds of Africans, especially the Muslim countries, its own identity of being a brother Muslim nation that cares about their future due to its shared historical, cultural and religious ties. In turn, African leaders expect Turkey to perform this role of a Muslim fellow with humanistic ambitions in a consistent manner in the implementation of its aid development policy.

This study assumes that African leaders have generally positive perceptions of the Turkish-Africa cooperation, and Turkey is getting their support in international instances, albeit limited. For instance, only two African countries, South Africa and Mozambique, did not vote in favour of Turkey to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2009-2010. On the other hand, trade volume between Turkey and SSA countries has increased since the beginning of Turkey's opening to Africa. Turkish total trade volume (export and import) exceeded 6.5 billion USD in 2013, up from 810 million USD in 2002 (*Turkish Statistical Institute*, 2014). At this point it can be questioned whether Turkey's development aid policy towards Africa is sustainable in the middle and long run—though this policy has caused significant positive changes in the African leaders' perceptions of Turkey and its aid policy. Still, there is no doubt that Turkey has developed a place in recent years with its development aid, but, for this position to be long-lasting, the nature and continuity of the aid is rather important.

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