

*Book Review*

## **Turkish foreign policy on Africa: the fundamental dynamics, opportunities and challenges**

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Not only does the African Continent host the countries with the fastest growing economies, it is also blessed with such resources as oil, natural gas, and valuable mines. These factors have paved the way for the continent's development as a competitive arena for such global powers as the United States, the European Union, and rising powers like China, Russia, Japan, and India. The interest of Turkey in Africa has also escalated, and the developing intensity of the relationships between Turkey and a number of African nations has naturally had repercussions on the Turkish academic field. The book being reviewed here details these repercussions, and in doing so, makes a strong contribution to the academic field, as while most studies concentrate on the decolonization process of African countries, as well as such disasters as famine, epidemics, and civil wars, Turkey's interest in the continent relates to the economy, policy and external factors. Accordingly, this book takes a critical view of Turkey's relations with African nations from a historical perspective. The author follows a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to demonstrate how Turkish foreign policy has transformed over time (p. 5), and the overall structure of the book is aimed at achieving this goal. It provides information on Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa, and suggests that the Turkish government should develop broad policies that can lead to long-term results in capacity building in African countries rather than producing temporary solutions.

The book contains an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The Introduction defines the aim, topic, and chapters of the book. The first chapter evaluates the Turkish-African relationship prior to Turkey's development of an initiative policy towards Africa. In this chapter, the author deals with the Ottoman presence in Africa, the decolonization of Africa, and the main rationale behind Turkey's initiative policy towards Africa. The second chapter investigates Turkey's political relations with African countries and areas of military cooperation, and touches on Turkey's contribution to sustainable peace on the continent, referring to Somalia, Turkey's bilateral relations with the continental countries, and its membership of regional organizations. The third chapter details Turkey's economic relationship with African countries and the investments of Turkish firms on the continent. The author underlines the escalation of the investments of Turkish companies in Africa, which amounted to 100 million dollars in 2003, rising to over 6 billion dollars in 2017. The fourth chapter deals with the tools of Turkey's soft power in Africa, such as humanitarian aid, education, and cultural cooperation, providing information on the activities of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, the Yunus Emre Institute, Turkish Airlines, TRT World, Anatolian Agency, the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Turkish Maarif Foundation, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs, among others. The author attaches considerable importance to these institutions in terms of their promotion of the Turkish perception in African countries, and the development of amicable relations. The fifth chapter is devoted to African studies in Turkey and around the world. This broad perspective provides the reader for developing suggestions on Turkish foreign policy in Africa. It should be noted that the title of this chapter may be confusing for the reader, as it suggests that only studies in Turkey are addressed. In the Conclusion, the author emphasizes that the aforementioned institutions, the diplomatic missions, and the growing investments have increased the visibility of Turkey in African nations. Finally, the author suggests that academicians should concentrate on specific topics related to the continent, rather than further studying Turkey's overall relations with African countries.

Some crucial issues that are well-detailed in international relations literature are discussed in the first chapter, such as the Baghdad Pact (pp. 13-14), the Suez Crisis (pp. 14-17), and the Bandung Conference (pp. 17-18). In addressing this historical framework, the author provides an understanding of Turkey's attitude toward African nations in these issues, and the background of Turkish-African

relations. In the second chapter, some significant bilateral and multilateral relations that exist between Turkey and African countries are exemplified, such as the “declaration of 2005 as the year of Africa”, the “First Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit in 2008” and the “Second Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit in 2013” (pp. 42-49). These examples elucidate how Turkey pays attention to cooperation, and how initiative policies were quickly transformed into partnership policies.

The book also takes a critical look at global studies, and compares them with Turkish academic offerings. It states that the majority of Turkish studies have been penned in Turkish, and that most neither develop a theoretical framework nor make a critical analysis (pp. 142-143). It claims that academic interest in the African continent is based mostly on either the political or economic fields, and suggests that regional expertise should also concentrate on the cultural interactions (pp. 164-165).

The chapters reveal the changing approach in Turkish foreign policy toward Africa, alleging that the main drivers behind Turkey’s African initiative are the growing influence of globalization and interdependence, and Turkey’s desire to maximize her interests. In this context, the book suggests that the policies initiated by Turkey toward Africa have worked in its favor. To illustrate, due to the need for the support of France in becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Turkey declined to support African countries in their struggle for independence during their decolonization period (p. 12). After the decolonization, however, when the Cyprus crisis broke out, Turkey sought support from African countries, 54 of which are members of the United Nations (p. 23). After losing its Western support, Turkey followed a western-oriented foreign policy, changed her foreign policy, and initiated an African policy by opening diplomatic missions, building a positive image about Turkey through the media, providing financial support, and carrying out military training activities to contribute to the attainment of peace, security and stability in Africa, and so forth (pp. 52-56). Conceivably, the best aspect of the book is its valuable opinion that Turkey’s interests are an influential factor in the transformation of her foreign policy.

As the author highlights in the preface (p. iii), what distinguishes the book from previous works among which it takes place in the literature, is that it deals with Turkish-African relations multi-dimensionally, and from a historical perspective, but focuses more on the initiative period that included the activities of non-state actors. Although there are some typographical errors in the text (e.g., the 87<sup>th</sup>, 94<sup>th</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup>, 98<sup>th</sup>, 102<sup>nd</sup>, 103<sup>rd</sup>, 106<sup>th</sup>, 107<sup>th</sup>, 110<sup>th</sup>, 111<sup>th</sup> and 118<sup>th</sup> pages are faded,

and typos (e.g., however is spelled incorrectly on page 141), the sentences are obvious, fluent and understandable. Furthermore, the presentation of the statistics in tables (e.g., p. 34, p. 60, and p.146) allows the reader to compare data, and to retain the subject visually in their memory. In short, the book not only makes a strong contribution to the literature, but is also a solid reference source for international relations students with an interest in African studies.



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