



A decade of opening

Turkey's new international role in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America¹

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ABSTRACT

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been central for the contemporary Turkish history due to its novel domestic identity grounded on the moderate Islamism, and an assertive, autonomous foreign policy, beyond the Western axis. For more than a decade, Turkey developed an active agenda as an emerging middle power, thus opening new spaces and increasing its presence in global political economy forums such as G-20. Until recently, Ankara tried to generate a non-turbulent regional environment to boost its political, economic and cultural relations with the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans. At the same time, Turkey started developing particular strategies for new regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. These spaces were chosen mainly to expand global influence and presence, and pursue market diversification through the creation of official representations, high-rank visits, and commercial initiatives. This paper attempts to bring some arguments about the sources of Ankara's diplomatic opening toward these regions in the age of the emerging middle powers, while, at the same time, comparing the similarities and differences of the opening's process and outcomes in both regional spaces.

Keywords: Turkish Foreign Policy, diplomatic opening, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa

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RESUMEN

El Partido Justicia y Desarrollo (AKP) ha sido central para la historia turca contemporánea debido a la aún novedosa identidad nacional asociada al islamismo moderado, y una política exterior firme, autónoma, más allá del eje occidental. Desde hace más de una década, Turquía desarrolló una agenda activa como una potencia emergente de tipo medio, abriendo así nuevos espacios y haciendo sentir su presencia en los foros mundiales de política económica, como el G-20. Hasta hace poco, Ankara intentó generar un entorno regional no turbulento para impulsar sus relaciones políticas, económicas y culturales con el Medio Oriente, el Cáucaso y los Balcanes. Al mismo tiempo, Turquía comenzó a desarrollar estrategias particulares para nuevas regiones como el África subsahariana y América Latina. Estos espacios se eligieron principalmente con el fin de expandir la influencia y presencia globales, y como forma de diversificar mercados a través de la creación de representaciones oficiales, visitas de alto rango, e iniciativas comerciales. Este trabajo intenta aportar algunos argumentos acerca de las fuentes de apertura diplomática de Ankara hacia estas regiones en la era de las potencias medias emergentes, mientras que, al mismo tiempo, intenta una comparación entre similitudes y diferencias en el proceso de la apertura y los resultados en ambos espacios regionales.

Palabras clave: política turca de Asuntos Exteriores, apertura diplomática, América Latina, África subsahariana

RESUM

El Partit Justícia i Desenvolupament (AKP) ha estat central per a la història turca contemporània per causa de l'encara nova identitat nacional associada a l'islamisme moderat, i una política exterior ferma, autònoma, més enllà de l'eix occidental. Des de fa més d'una dècada, Turquia va desenvolupar una agenda activa com potència emergent de tipus mitjà, obrint així nous espais i fent sentir la seva presència en els fòrums mundials de política econòmica, com el G-20. Fins fa poc, Ankara va intentar generar un entorn regional no turbulent per a impulsar les seves relacions polítiques, econòmiques i culturals amb el Mig Orient, el Caucas i els Balcans. Alhora, Turquia va començar a desenvolupar estratègies particulars per a noves regions com l'Àfrica subsahariana i Amèrica Llatina. Aquests espais es van triar principalment per tal d'expandir la influència i presència globals, i com a forma de diversificar mercats a través de la creació de representacions oficials, visites d'alt rang, i iniciatives comercials. Aquest treball intenta aportar alguns arguments sobre les fonts d'obertura diplomàtica d'Ankara cap a aquestes regions en l'era de les potències mitjanes emergents, mentre que, al mateix temps, intenta una comparació entre similituds i diferències en el procés de l'obertura i els resultats en tots dos espais regionals.

Paraules clau: política turca d'Afers Exteriors, obertura diplomàtica, Amèrica Llatina, Àfrica subsahariana

1. Introduction

From early 2000s to until tragic aftermath of the Syrian Civil War, Turkey was the ‘rising star’ of the Middle East and Eurasia⁴. Presented as a role model in relation to their increasing political and economic strength, in addition to her traditional security ties with the West, Ankara seemed to live a golden age according to the local and foreign experts, even if paradoxically the general trajectory of its foreign policy was using the liberal norms of the international order to be moving away for the West⁵.

One of the central characteristics of the so-called ‘new’ Turkish Foreign Policy – represented in the figures of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Ahmet Davutoğlu – has been the increasing regional activism, whilst also reflect a continuation of other periods such as the Menderes (1950-1960), and Özal governments (1983-1993). According to Ülgen, “the desire to create a more ambitious, diverse, and multi-regional foreign policy cannot be attributed solely to the AKP leadership. Previous Turkish leaders, including former presidents Turgut Özal and Suleyman Demirel, charted similar courses for Turkish foreign policy. Özal wanted Turkey to acquire a more influential role in the Middle East, while Demirel wanted to develop a larger role for Turkey in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Former foreign minister İsmail Cem spoke of Turkey’s destiny as a bridge of civilizations. Taking this past into account, one can see how the new Turkish foreign policy fits into a historical continuum”⁶.

Nonetheless, the scope, depth and extension had been more significant during the AKP rule than in previous eras, at least, until the last couple of years when the consequences of the Syrian Crisis jeopardize the Turkish regional ambitions, and the overall foreign policy plans. According to former Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Primer Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has proven its ability to govern competent foreign policies by emphasizing Turkey’s robustness in the cases of three major earthquakes (security, politics, economy) of international system, namely the global systemic change of the demise of the Soviet Union, 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the Arab Spring⁷. In relation to this last event, there has been increasing criticism about the ‘robustness’ and the effectivity of the foreign policy in the context of the post-revolutionary and conflictual changes in the region⁸.

⁴ Kinzer (2008) & Çağaptay (2014)

⁵ Altunisik (2005); Ülgen (2011); Kirişci (2011) & Kubicek (2013)

⁶ Ülgen (2010)

⁷ Davutoğlu (2013)

⁸ Aras (2014) & Öniş (2012)

In traditional terms, Turkey put distance to former Ottoman territories, shaped by a nonintrusive and passive foreign policy, which was enforced by the NATO membership since 1952. At the same time, Middle Eastern countries ‘otherize’ Turkey as a consequence of increasing nationalist discourse in that period, which identified Turkey as the descendent of the Ottoman Empire, thus affecting Turkey’s image in the region. Another negative element for the regional agenda was the fast diplomatic recognition of Israel, being the first Muslim country to perform that action. However, the ascendance of a conservative political movement in Turkey, its compatibility with democracy, and the promotion of new regional ties transformed her perception⁹. Since the AKP reached the government, Turkey has increasingly been involved in regional dynamics, specially reinforced first by the development of the ‘Policy of Zero Problems with Neighbors’¹⁰, and then by supporting democratic claims in the Arab Spring. In this context, Ankara has tried to become gradually a ‘game changer’, and a ‘order settler’, not only using traditional sources of power and cooperation, but also using a set of new tools traditionally understood as soft power, such as public diplomacy, soap operas¹¹, tourism, and scholarship, among others¹². Additionally, the Turkey’s endeavor to access to the EU membership and the steps taken to realize this aim have affected positively the construction of soft power image of Turkey both in the eyes of the Middle East countries and other regional blocs worldwide. Reformist parties like Ennahda in Tunisia or the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt looked quite interested in the Turkish Model, in which the AKP - as a representative of Islamist, but democratic movement – was capable to carry societal and political transformation, thus defeating the military bureaucracy. In this sense, the positive image of Ankara in Middle East, provided a windows of opportunity as an alternative, and attractive model for change in one of the most complicated region. However, it did not last so long.

Her regional image failed progressively, after the Turkey’s ineffectiveness in the Syrian Spring, the reaction after coup d’etat in Egypt in 2013 and the Gezi Protests. At the same time, Turkey become – because of the deepening of the Syrian Civil War and the rifts with the European Union and United States – increasingly isolated, receiving also increasing hostility by Russia and Iran. Additionally, Turkey has been facing a humanitarian crisis stemming from the Syria civil war between different groups from the Assad regime to the Islamic State.

⁹ Altunışık (2008)

¹⁰ Davutoglu (2013)

¹¹ Turkey also an exporter of TV series, especially in North Africa and the Middle East for which receives more than USD 200 million annually

¹² Kalin (2011); Ozkan (2015) & Benhaïm and Öktem (2015)

To regain international support, Ankara focused on humanitarian assistance as a niche diplomacy in which Turkey has been one of the generous donor in the world in the last years. In 2014, Turkey ranked third in terms of giving humanitarian aid. In this sense, the refugee crisis has been a central issue not only for Ankara's diplomacy, but the overall government¹³. On the other hand, Turkey implemented an assertive foreign policy, in order to being recognized as an influential actor in the global context. Multidimensional and proactive foreign policy had replaced unidimensional and reactive one in AKP era slightly and new foreign policy pushed Turkish foreign policy agents to take role not only in their traditional axis but also in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the 'golden years' of the 'new foreign policy' has pushed ministries and governmental agencies to advance a more assertive policy in other regions like sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, traditionally blinded for Ankara's diplomacy. In order to go deep inside of Turkish foreign policy in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, we bring the concept of decision-making interdependence, elaborated on the interaction between regional and extra-regional dynamics.

In this sense, the main argument that we advanced is that the increasing domestic and regional troubles generated additional pressure to achieve greater legitimacy in the international order, whereby the Turkish diplomacy choose to boost their relation with these regions. This study our focus evaluates the Turkish policy as an emerging middle power towards Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, in a context of increasing regional and domestic turmoil. In the first part, we present the case of the Ankara's global strategy, emphasizing the global and regional incentives and constraints that have shaped the foreign policy during the AKP's domestic political hegemony. The second section is focused on the sources of the diplomatic opening in the Global South, by evaluating the main hypothesis about the increasing engagement with Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, the article describes the main factors, processes and events in the Turkey's regional agenda towards these novel spaces.

2. Turkey's global strategy under the AKP

In addition to the neoliberal reforms since early 1980s, the Turkey's 'Strengthening the Turkish Economy' Program, implemented to escape from the effects of 2001 crisis under the commandship of then Minister of Economy Kemal Derviş, was central to normalize, and provide the basis for a further economic expansion based on open approach to the globalization and internationalization. The AKP not only take advantage of this program but deepened it. The 2001 crisis

¹³ Ortega and Mourenza (2014); İçduygu (2015) & Gonzalez Levaggi (2015)

helps AKP in economic and political terms, since delegitimizes their traditional political opponents, in addition to receive a sustainable economic program. In addition to the political rise of the AKP, non-governmental and sub-governmental actors – such as global companies, businessmen associations, and humanitarian organizations–expanded their influence in the economy and the diplomacy. In the last area, they play a key role in the expansion of the Turkish presence worldwide.

During more than a decade, Turkey has been at the center of changing patterns in regional and global politics, from the emergence of new powers to the gradual destabilization of the Middle East. In order to improve the country's leverage in a shifting scenario, the arrival of the AKP provide a new foreign policy strategy to attached her capabilities with the highest national interests through the implementation of a novel foreign policy. While the concept of grand strategy, understood as a "set of ideas for deploying a nation's resources to achieve its interests over the long run"¹⁴, is applied to great powers, a middle emerging power could develop a global strategy in order to extend the influence and leverage beyond its region, although with limited expectations. In this sense, this type of strategy consists of three elements: interests, objectives and choices.

Since the foundation of the Republic, the Ankara's key national interest has been the national security, while her main objective had been the confinement of the security externalities. Due to the different sources of threats, Turkey passed from the isolation and balancing practices until the end of the Second World War, to the dependent alliance with United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The changing international context, and the rise of a new political elite in the Turkish government provide important incentives for a foreign policy change in a more assertive, autonomous direction. In addition to the security concern, freedom and prosperity were incorporated as national interests, where the country start to expand networks in the region to expand strategic and economic cooperation, particularly in those regions who belong previously to the Ottoman Empire¹⁵. Even if some changes in the foreign policy began in the mid-1990s, the theorization and partial implementation of this new approach – which change also the general orientation of the foreign policy – had been responsibility of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Three notions have defined the Davutoğlu's orientations, namely multi-dimensionalism, activism, and order-building¹⁶. According to Özpek & Demirağ,

¹⁴ Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth (2012) 3:11.

¹⁵ Walker (2011) & Walker (2011): pp. 6-7

¹⁶ Ünay (2010): pp. 21

the “multi-dimensional model that derives from the philosophical standpoint of Davutoğlu is the bow and arrow analogy (...) he argues that Turkey, with its ideological and geographical advantages, is an archer, and the more it draws the back of the bow through the East, the farther the arrow flies West”¹⁷. Using this metaphor, Davutoğlu contends with the idea that Turkey can be a supporter of the West on handling global problems.

The idea of order-building can be closely connected with the new role as an emerging middle country, and the quest to achieve regional primacy. According to Wang and French “[middle powers] are not so powerful as to be able to exert decisive influence on major issues of international security and economy. Nor are they so powerless as to be unable to protect themselves from the undesirable impacts of other countries’ actions”¹⁸. However, this idea is too broad, and it includes from Sweden to Brazil are. Turkey differs from its counterparts such as Austria, Sweden, Belgium, or Canada in terms of its demand to reform the current international order, of its ambition to be regarded as a regional and benevolent power, and of its undemocratic characteristics. As an emerging middle power, Turkey has been seeking an alternative regional and world order¹⁹. In this sense, this approach could be comparable at some extent to BRICS countries, such as Brazil or Russia²⁰.

Under the rubric of emerging middle powership, both Brazil and Turkey conducted the role of mediator in the Iran nuclear deal, even if the established powers rejected the deal and put new sanctions over Iran²¹. In this case, the attempted mediation illustrates how emerging middle powers are collaborating in the way of reforming the international order at the expense of contradicting the hegemonic power of that order. Another dimension of emerging powership of Turkey have seen through the discourses of the AKP leadership. At the annual United Nations discourse, Erdoğan argues that ‘the world is bigger than five’ as an explicit illustration of how Turkey perceives the unfair structure of the United Nations Security Council²². As a self-promoted leader in the region, and being a reformist and legitimizing actor of the world order and having an unstable democracy with undemocratic characteristics²³, Turkey is an emerging middle power which looks for greater influence not only within the regions it locates (Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus) but also beyond the region – sub-Saharan

¹⁷ Özpek & Demirağ (2012)

¹⁸ Wang and French (2013): p. 985

¹⁹ Stein (2015)

²⁰ Bacik (2013): p. 764.

²¹ Reinly (2016)

²² Dıyal Sabah (2015)

²³ Jordaan (2003):p.168

Africa and Latin America. Originally, straining the bow has been created in order to build a positive image both in the former Ottoman territories and in the West. The arrow-bow metaphor can also be translated to the non-western world, since Turkey has been also presented not only as a bridge between the West and the Muslim world, but also an emerging development partner for the Least Developed Countries (LDC).

In relation to the activism, Turkey become an important regional actor in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Middle East by developing multiples activities and projects, and investing heavily in cultural, economic and political assets. Considering Turkey's incremental role in this region, there was an important diversification of relations on the basis of minimizing risks, increasing soft-power driven cooperation, and the impulse to geographies other than the West. In this context, the 'Strategic Depth' had been paradoxically complementary with the failed attempts to joining the European Union.

In the Caucasus, energy politics has been at the core of everyday-life politics and intergovernmental politics. Pipeline projects (TAP, TANAP) improved relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan, when relations with Armenia are still cold. When Turkey tries to rebuild positive relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan tried hamper this initiative. In this case, Turkey is trapped under the Armenian-Azerbaijani conundrum²⁴. In Middle East and the Balkans, Ankara pursued a foreign policy without presenting any political or developmental condition. This lack of conditionality provides a warm welcomed thus boosting their benign face, and positive feedback for the regimes, and the public opinion. This popularity originates from two sources, the presentation as a role model for the Arab countries due to its relatively harmonic secular-Islamic structure; and the attractive 'zero-problems with neighbors' doctrine which had brought self-confidence and positive reception. However, the Arab Spring created some problems in her big dreams to become a regional hegemon in the Middle East²⁵. Turkey supported a dramatic democratic transformation in the region, especially supporting groups connected with the Muslim Brotherhood all over the Arab World. The consequences have been quite negative, especially in relation to the Turkey's increasing involvement in the Sunni-Shiite rift, that overturns her dreams to revive – at least ideationally – the Ottoman Empire²⁶. Additionally, the Syrian internal conflict, with the emerging of the Islamic State, and the empowerment of the Syrian Kurds brought more headaches for the Turkish strategist that, at the end, broke the plans for am-

²⁴ Balcı (2014): p. 52

²⁵ Hinnebusch (2015)

²⁶ Öniş (2014): p. 205

bitious plans, showing a slow – but unfailing – return to her traditional national interest, security, at least in regional terms.

3. Diplomatic Opening in Comparative Perspective

The transformation of the Turkish economy in the last decades, and the expansion her interests beyond the traditional boundaries, opened the way to engage with new spaces like Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. The foundations of the diplomatic opening towards the Global South, can be addresses in multiple ways. In this section we present three competing goals that connect the Turkey's Global Strategy with the about the creation and development of stronger ties with these regions: markets, identity and status.

The search for new markets could be address as the central goal of the expansion toward new territories. In this sense, Turkey was transformed progressively into a 'trading state' in which the transformation of an inward economy to an export-oriented thanks to the liberalization process after the 1980s, in addition to a "gradual shift from policies derived from a repertoire based on the military-political and territorial system to policies associated with a trading state in foreign policy"²⁷. This branch of the literature highlights the increasing influence of economic factors, and business interest groups in the determination of the foreign policy aims²⁸. One on side, the external sector has becoming more and more important, growing from USD 82 billion to almost USD 400 billion²⁹. In this line, Kirişci argues that "the growth of foreign trade, has a direct bearing on employment, growth, investments, tax revenues, and wealth generation in Turkey and inevitably enters the decision-making matrix of the governments as well as traditional foreign policy-makers, such as the military and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs"³⁰. On the other side, the state was no longer the only center of references and decisions. Businessmen associations that formed by the 'Anatolian Tigers'³¹ were quite active in pushing for new opportunities. As an example, Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) and TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists) used to attend foreign visits of the Prime Minister Erdoğan in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Additiona-

²⁷ Kirişci (2009): p. 43

²⁸ Öniş (2006) & Cagaptay (2014)

²⁹ UN Comtrade Data (2014)

³⁰ Kirişci (2009): p. 48

³¹ The 'Anatolian Tigers' represents a group of private entrepreneurs from a number of inner Turkish cities which are characterized by a high degree of competitiveness, in addition to a conservative background. For further analysis about the 'Anatolian Tigers' *vide* Aymerich, (2009) & [Veiga]: 2011

lly, to the countries these actors had been visiting, Turkish Airlines arranged new flies in order to increase the communication between Turkey and its regional counterparts. After the Erdoğan-Gülen rift in late 2013, TUSKON was excluded as a reliable partner by the AKP diminishing both economic and political influence in Turkey, and abroad³². The opening to new regions is basically a process driven by global incentives to increase the interdependence with the global economy, in addition to the rise of new economic actors with a particular aim, open new markets for this manufactured products. In this circumstance, both Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America seems to frame in this approach.

The second approximation is related with the identity nexus, which reflects the neo-ottoman option in the political and societal elite. The arguments are mainly grounded on the Davutoğlu's doctrine of '*Stratejik Derinlik*' (*Strategic Depth*)³³. As part of a broader project to revive the Ottoman culture, history and tradition in Turkey, connecting again with the former territories thought different forms of bilateral, and regional cooperation has been at the core of the AKP's foreign policy strategy. Taspınar identifies three aspects of the aspect of the AKP's neo-Ottomanism: willingness to come to terms with Turkey's Ottoman and Islamic heritage; sense of grandeur and self-confidence in foreign policy; and the goal of embracing the West as much as the Islamic world³⁴. As a practical consequence, the foreign policy has been more interested to look for a grand regional policy in the former Ottoman territories – from the Balkans to North Africa, and the Caucasus – than to promote engagement with the West, especially after the freezing of the Turkey's membership process to the EU. Another interpretation about the restoration of the Ottoman heritage has been the use of the religion as a tool to advance political aims, developing an updated version of a late-imperial Pan-Islamism³⁵. This interpretive drift was quite relevant during the Davutoğlu's Prime Ministership, which also coincided with the Arab revolution and the consequences of the Syrian Civil War³⁶. In addition to the monopolization of the political arena by the AKP³⁷, groups from civil society and NGOs with some degree of affinity with the government has been also relevant in this period. Humanitarian organization such as *Kimse Yok Mu?* (*Is Anybody There?*), the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH - *İnsani Yardım Vakfı*), the Turkish Red Crescent (*Kızılay*), in addition to Islamic groups such as the Gülen Movement, and even business organizations like MUSIAD has developed complementary activities abroad in relation to the Turkish state. In this context, the opening to Sub-Saharan Africa can be

³² Balci (2014)

³³ Davutoğlu (2001)

³⁴ Taspınar (2008): pp.14-16

³⁵ Ozkan (2014)

³⁶ Ozkan (2015)

³⁷ Öniş (2016)

only partially related with this new narrative of the Turkey's religious and cultural heritage, while this kind of ties with Latin America are almost absent, despite the Presidency of Religious Affairs' (*Diyanet*) efforts to set up the 'Latin American Religious Muslim Leaders'³⁸ or some activities of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) supporting cultural and Islamic-related projects³⁹.

Finally, the quest for a higher status in the international arena could be another factor that has influenced the Turkish opening. In the context of an increasing decentered globalism⁴⁰, the second generation of 'second-generation' emerging powers or near-BRICS play a key role both in terms of regional dynamics, but also reshaping the institutional and normative global context. Ziya Onis and Mustafa Kutlay identified four conditions in which middle emerging powers - like Turkey - can "can punch above their weight"⁴¹: "(i) the ability to serve as role models based on their soft power resources, i.e., the quality of their developmental and democratic credentials, (ii) the capacity to build effective coalitions with both established and emerging powers on the basis of a consistent set of normative principles, (iii) governance capacity based on a recognition of the limits of middle power influence and avoiding a mismatch of expectations and capabilities, and (iv) the capacity to identify niche areas in regional and global governance where they can make a distinct and unique contribution"⁴².

In this sense, Turkey has tried to 'punch above their weight' also by exerting and expanding their capabilities and role model into new regions, from which has expected support for her global initiatives and goals⁴³. Developmental and humanitarian cooperation, global governance, conflict management, and support for peaceful development of nuclear energy have been addressed as key niche areas in which Turkey has used to promote her national interests, and channelizes her global ambitious. In the search for global actorship, Turkey has tried both overcome the increasing regional isolation⁴⁴, in addition to reach support from extra-regional actors in different global initiatives such as the failed candidacy for the non-permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council (period 2015-2016), G20 Presidency (2015), and the World Humanitarian Summit (2016). In the next table, we selected the main element of the diplomatic opening to these regions, while in the next sub-sections we present the main characteristics in the Ankara's regional policies.

³⁸ Hurriyet Daily News (2014)

³⁹ Seibert (2015)

⁴⁰ Buzan (2011)

⁴¹ Cooper and Mo (2011)

⁴² Onis and Kutlay (2016): p. 5

⁴³ Ünay (2015)

⁴⁴ Grigoriadis (2015)

	Latin America	Africa
General Approach	Multidimensional policy	Multidimensional policy
Strategic Goals	Status / New Markets	Identity / New Markets / Status
Regional's policies	Bilateral / Multilateral	Bilateral / Quasi-interregional / Multilateral
Decision-Makers Perceptions	Distance	Common Afro-Eurasian space
High Level-Visits (Presidential and PM visit by country)	6 (2003-2016)	+ 20 (2003-2016 in Sub-Saharan Africa)
Trade	0.9 billion (2000) 7.8 billion (2014)	5.47 (2003) \$17.5 billion (2015)
Main Partners	Brazil, Mexico, Colombia & Argentina	South Africa
Total Investment	-	US\$ 6 billion (2003-2014)
Official Development Assistance	US\$ 4 million (2010)	US\$ 782 million (2013)
Humanitarian Aid	US\$ 2.8 million (2008-2012)	US\$ 193 million (2008-2012)
Flag Regional Example	Mexico	Somalia

Table I –Africa and Latin America in Comparative Perspective

3.1. Sub-Saharan Africa: new horizons of cooperation

Turkey relations with Sub-Saharan Africa can be divided into three periods⁴⁵. The first period encapsulates limited relation between Africa and the Ottoman Empire; the second is between 1923 and 1998, the year new Turkish Republic was established by Atatürk and the year Africa Action Plan took place, respectively; and finally, third is after 1998 which covers active engagement with many African states that starts with the Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem, and continue during the entire AKP period. After 2005, when Turkey declared 'the Year of Africa', relations with Africa start to increase their density, reaching a climax in the early 2010s with the Turkey's high profile involvement in Somalia.

⁴⁵ Özkan and Akgün (2010)

These activism was not only developed by the Prime Minister Office, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but involves institution like TİKA which provides developmental and humanitarian, the Ministry of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) that provide scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students, and Yunus Emre Institute, who main aim is the promotion of the Turkish Language and Culture. In addition to official efforts, actors from the civil society, and the private sector have been also relevant. Business associations like MÜSİAD – close to the government –, and TUKSON – businessmen branch of the Gülen movement –, or faith-based NGOs such as İHH or *Kimse Yok Mu?*, this last one also related with the *Fethullahçı*. Since the emphasis of this paper is on the AKP late era, it is important to address the dimensions of the Turkish activism in Africa compared with the low degree of interactions, the official indifference, and the passiveness of the sub-national actors towards the continent a couple a decade ago.

First, Turkey increased expeditiously its official presence in Africa. While in 2009 Turkey had only 12 embassies – only 7 seven in the Sub-Saharan area –, the number rise to 39 in total, making the country one of the top three emerging powers in terms of diplomatic presence, next to China⁴⁶. At the same time, a series of summits and meetings were arranged in order to foster cultural, economic, and, more importantly, humanitarian engagement with the region. As İbrahim Kalın affirms, by diversifying foreign policy agenda Turkey has tried to broaden its sphere of influence through Latin America and Africa. In this sense, the engagement with Africa is not solely a sign of seeking alternative foreign policy maneuver realm, but a proof of Turkey's expansion beyond the traditional boundaries of her foreign policy⁴⁷.

As an inclusive and constitutive attempt, Turkey adopted a narrative that involves both faith-based humanitarianism and economic concerns⁴⁸. The discourse that Turkey has maintained is shaped around Turkey's assertion on being a benevolent humanitarian power in Middle East and Africa. Signs of this assertion found realistic based on both economic deepening and increasing volume of humanitarian assistance. While in 2003 total trade volume between Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa was \$5.47, this amount has exceeded \$17.5 billion in 2015⁴⁹. The Anatolian middle class – especially MÜSİAD –has been a central actor and part-

⁴⁶ Shinn (2012) & MFA (2016a)

⁴⁷ Kalın, (2011) 2:8-12

⁴⁸ Bacık and Afacan (2013): p. 483

⁴⁹ MFA (2016a)

ner of Turkish state in expanding economic opportunities in Africa, thus perpetuating the idea of Turkey as a benign power on the African public opinion.

Lately, Turkish officials have emphasized the humanitarian dimension of Turkish regional policy⁵⁰. In order to convince the audience of both international platforms and in the eyes of African policy makers, Turkey eagerly improved the amount of humanitarian aid. For instance, Turkey has shown tremendous efforts to help solving Somalia's structural problems such as lack of infrastructure, public health, security and education systems, among other issues. Somalia has been a test case for two reasons: first, Turkey has been an exception to the norm that extra-regional powers tries not to being deeply involved in this country due to the uninterrupted security instability. Second, Turkey can involve actively and harmoniously sub-governmental actors next to the official efforts⁵¹. Somalia has been a focal point in the Africa's opening. For example, Erdoğan has been the only foreign leader visiting Somalia since early 1990s⁵². At the same time, a high amount of foreign aid has been provided to Somalia (\$115 million only in 2013!)⁵³, whilst Turkey also has backed the construction of military training facilities in order to strengthen the capabilities of Somalian army, in a country in which terrorism and violence are parts of daily-life⁵⁴. In this sense, economic and military power of Turkey have been used to increase Turkey's visibility on Africa, international platforms and, of course, domestic politics. Despite of the positive reception, there has been some critics due to the mute policy in relation to the Sudan's massive killings in Darfur. Turkey is accused of being contradictory due to its uncooperative attitude with the West in the context of Darfur crisis, labeled by some Western actors as a genocide. Özkan calls Turkey foreign policy behavior toward Sudan as 'passive silence diplomacy'⁵⁵. According to Özkan, passive silence diplomacy is constitutive policy that is propped up by economic and political relations and more importantly this kind of diplomacy is mandatory in this conjuncture⁵⁶.

On sub-state level, *Gülenists* had represented an interesting face of Turkish soft power in Africa because of their educational and humanitarian activism. One example has been the Olympics on Turkish Language held annually by Gülen movement, in which African countries used to have an important participation. Nonetheless, where the '2013 December events' happened, the alliance between

⁵⁰ Davutoğlu (2013) & Haşimi (2014)

⁵¹ Özkan (2014)

⁵² Özer (2016)

⁵³ TIKA (2013)

⁵⁴ Özer (2014)

⁵⁵ Özkan (2012): p. 24

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*

Gülenists and the AKP – or to put it simple, between Fetullah Güllen and Recep Erdoğan - broke up with the corruption allegation on several ministries of AKP. The dispute escalated to the official denomination of the Gülen Movement, and their different economic, cultural and educational branches - by the Turkish Government - as part of the FETÖ (*Fetullahçı* Terror Organisation) terrorist organization. This domestic fight has enormous consequences abroad, from United States to Central Asia. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, Erdoğan demanded to close the Gülenist schools and stop the movement activities in their countries, while most of them ignored these request⁵⁷. The official policy has been a central factor to explain the Turkey's ascendance in the region, while the role of business and cultural organization allowed the construction of a stronger link with the local societies. These disputes removed depth and dynamism, while transforming the overall relationship excessively focused on the *Fetullahçı* threat.

In sum, Turkey become increasingly involve in Africa to pursue more pro-active foreign policy and to build win-win economic relations in which there was no exploitative history in the period of 2002-2013. Being a regional power requires both soft power discourses and economic power. Turkey endeavors to be a benevolent regional power, which encapsulates the region by, especially, giving foreign aid and emphasizing humanitarian assistance. But one cannot deny that Islam is shaping Turkish foreign policy not only in the Middle East but also in Sub-Saharan Africa as we can see in both pro-Islamic discourses and assistances that mostly given to the countries having intense Islamic population such as Somalia.

3.2. Latin America: lands of opportunities

In a recent conference, Monique Sochaczewski states that "for much of the twentieth century and especially during the Cold War, Brazil and Turkey could be understood more as "distant cousins", with scattered contacts"⁵⁸. This argument can be translated to the overall region. The Latin American connection seems to be a novelty for both Turkish decision-makers and societal actors. Turkey has been present in the major Latin American countries since the first decades of the Republic but bilateral and regional ties were fragile unless until mid-1990s, when the forces of internationalization and globalization provide additional incentives for transregional projection. In addition to international context, additional problems such as the official passiveness, geographical distance, language difficulties, cultural barriers, and different sort of crisis also provides a gloomy background to mutual interaction.

⁵⁷ Oda TV (2015)

⁵⁸ Sochaczewski (2015)

Departing from Sub-Saharan Africa case, relations with Latin America can be explained into four different periods. After an initial phase during the times of the Ottoman Empire with the signature of the first agreements, relations were limited and bounded to official diplomatic representations until the end of the Cold War. Real improvements start in 1992 when Turkey received the first Latin American high-level visit from the Argentine President Carlos Menem. After that, President Süleyman Demirel visited Argentina, Brazil and Chile in 1995 opening a broad space for cooperation in several areas from defense to trade including educational and technological cooperation, energy and drug trafficking, among others⁵⁹. These positive moves were then incorporated into the “Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean” in 1998. A final phase – driven especially by economic factors – begins to take shape after the Turkey’s 2001 economic crisis, which intertwined with a more favorable international context. Grounded on the ‘Action Plan’, impulse of an official-based foreign policy by promoting high-level visits, commercial agreements, and educational ties⁶⁰. During the AKP era, Latin America has been a recipient of increasing official efforts from Ankara. As Prime Minister and President, Erdoğan visited several times the region with an initial emphasis on Brazil, and then to the countries that belong to the Pacific Alliance such as Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Peru. From Lula da Silva to Cristina Kirchner, the main Latin American leaders also has paid a visit to Turkey during the last decade, showing an increasing interest about the Eurasian rising star⁶¹.

During the 2000s, Latin America experienced a period of economic growth and poverty reduction that has impacted positively in the region prospects in the international political economy. As a middle emerging country, Turkey also saw economic opportunities in the region, initially related with purchase of primary resources and, then – not so successfully - with the intention to exports low and medium-technology products and develop investments, in addition to diversify markets⁶². These guidelines were incorporated into the official document “Turkey’s Trade Development Strategy towards the Americas” (2006) released by Undersecretariat of the Prime Ministry for Foreign Trade which recognizes the undiscovered economic potential due to “lack of scheduled flights, non-familiarity to the region’s languages, economic crises in the region and the following protectionist trade and exchange rate policies, complex preferential trade network, insufficient number of our embassies in the region are discouraging factors for

⁵⁹ MRECIC (2016) & Sochaczewski (2015)

⁶⁰ Gonzalez Levaggi (2013): p. 108

⁶¹ MFA (2016b)

⁶² Tahsin (2015)

our businessmen”⁶³. Some of these shortcomings has been addressed. Now, there are two direct flights, and Turkey has provided language scholarship to an important amount of Latin American students, while the number of Embassies has been risen from 6 in 2006 to 13 nowadays, with the opening of Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

In contrast with Sub-Saharan Africa, the main economic, societal and state actors that has been an active part of the overall Turkey activism are present in a lower degree in Latin America. For example, MUSIAD do not have any office in the region. TIKA and Anadolu Agency have recently started their activities, while Turkish Airlines have only two flight to the region, covering four capitals⁶⁴. The only organization with territorial base – besides the Turkish diplomatic representations – is the *Hizmet* movement who have presence in all the main countries in the region, including schools and branches of the businessmen organization TUSKON⁶⁵. However, the well-known conflict with the political coalition have caused a lessen influence of the overall Turkish interests since the official representations have displaced the Gülen Movement from any public or private involvement while, the members and institutions of the Movement started to criticize heavily the AKP regime. Another economic actor that has been involved is the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) that has organized trade missions, bi-national trade councils and round table meetings.

An additional incentive to engage with Latin American and the Caribbean has been the goal to become a regional power with global actorship. To do so, Turkey has expanded their official representation network, expand the agenda with key regional actors, organized quasi-interregional meeting with CARICOM, become an observer member of the Pacific Alliance – currently the most dynamic economic regional organization in the Americas –, and developed strategic partnerships with Brazil, and lately Mexico in the context of G-20, and the MIKTA group. The increasing presence of Turkish interests in the region have catapulted the Eurasian country into the second ring of extra-regional powers in Latin American next to India, Indonesia, South Korea and South Africa. At the same time, during the last years Turkey has increased the relations with the Caribbean countries – especially Cuba and Haiti – in which Turkey has offered developmental and humanitarian aid, not only to increase her regional leverage but also in the context of the narrative of a more just and fair international order.

⁶³ DTM (2006)

⁶⁴ TCCB (2015)

⁶⁵ Vagni (2014): pp. 10-11

The Latin American dimension of the Turkish Foreign Policy is such a new one, mainly driven by concerns about market diversification, and the quest for an emerging status in a changing, decentered world. Even if still is a secondary destination for the decision-makers, Ankara cannot ignore the region anymore since it now occupies a higher place in terms of trade, cooperation and global partnership.

Conclusions

In searching for a higher global status, Ankara has implemented an assertive opening in the two little explored regions. Trade, status and identity had influenced in different way the Turkey's diplomatic opening towards Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. In both cases, trade has been a central driver. However, this dimension is supplemented in a different way. The opening towards Sub-Saharan Africa put a higher emphasis on identity and developmental aid, whilst global governance has been a key topic in Latin America, especially in relation to the key actors like, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. Anyway, the successful developmental cooperation practices in Africa have been recently transferred to Latin America, with the opening of TİKA offices in Mexico D.F. and Bogota.

The expansion in these new regional spaces has made the Ankara's interests more global, thus providing not only benefits, but also important challenges. In relation to the benefits, nowadays Turkey is a global player. According to the Global Diplomacy Index 2016 – which measures official missions worldwide – Turkey is located in the sixth position, while is added to their membership in the G-20 and MIKTA exclusive clubs. At the same time, the rising position in world politics was accompanied with a limited, but still relevant diversification of her international trade.

Even though Turkey has reach a higher status, the challenges could undermine the actual position. In the first place, the increasing regional isolation – despite last reconciliations with Russia and Israel –, the strained relations with the West, in addition to domestic problems such domestic terrorism, or the July 15th failed military coup, which are making Turkey less and less appealing as a regional and global partner. Second, there are increasing criticism about the overextension of Turkey's diplomatic presence, and initiatives not only in the region, but also in countries where there is a gap between the official investment, and the expected returns. Third, until the end of the (global) dispute between the AKP government, and the Güllen movement, the Turkish diplomacy would have to face additional criticism in different countries of these regions, thus undermining the official narrative and actions.

The new role of Turkey as a global actor comes with greater responsibilities. To maintain this status, diplomatic presence and niche diplomacy are important, but also economic and political stability. In this regard, nowadays the key to be an effective and valued global actor for Turkey laid in the achievement of a peaceful, stable and consensual political environment. If this is not maintained over time, nor her status as global actor.

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