

Research Paper

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# Turkey's Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa

## Shifting Alliances and Strategic Diversification



**CHATHAM  
HOUSE**

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## Summary

- Turkey's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years has been driven by the region's growing economic importance to Ankara; its interest in diversifying away from the Middle East; and the apparent desire for influence among sub-Saharan Africa's large Muslim population.
- Turkey's increasingly strained relations with traditional partners in the Middle East suggest that it will continue to expand its Africa strategy. The number of Turkish embassies in the region has risen, as have the number of high-level bilateral visits. The Second Turkey–Africa Partnership Summit was held in Equatorial Guinea in late 2014.
- Somalia has been central to Turkey's Africa strategy. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Mogadishu in 2011 was the first by a non-African head of government in almost 20 years, and Turkish business and humanitarian agencies and NGOs are increasingly present in the country.
- Trade with sub-Saharan African countries represents only a fraction of Turkey's global trade, but foreign direct investment is increasing, and a number of free trade agreements are being negotiated. Turkish businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, are carving out a niche in construction and in information and communications technology, and Turkish Airlines is becoming prominent as a carrier to the region.
- Turkish aid to sub-Saharan Africa has grown. The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) has expanded its presence, and there has been significant growth in the number of Turkish scholarships available to African students.
- Turkish humanitarian organizations are prominent in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in those countries with significant Muslim populations. However, organizations linked to Fethullah Gülen have found their operations under increasing pressure from the AKP government following the rift between Erdoğan and his former ally – although some African governments have apparently resisted pressure from Ankara to close down Gülenist-run schools.

## Introduction

Turkey's engagement with Africa has expanded significantly since 2005 in the fields of diplomacy, trade, investment, aid, education, religion, culture, security and crisis-management. Much of this involvement is concentrated in North Africa, which remains far more important than sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to the Turkish economy. For example, Algeria was Turkey's 24th largest export partner and its 20th largest import partner in 2012, while Nigeria was 53rd in terms of both exports and imports and South Africa was 55th and 38th respectively.<sup>1</sup> However, Turkey is paying increasing attention to SSA countries, given their growing economic importance, and in particular to key powers such as South Africa and Nigeria. That many SSA countries have predominantly Muslim populations or have a significant Muslim minority is an additional factor in Turkey's interest.

Turkey's *Opening Up to Africa Policy*, issued in 1998, served as a clear signal of the country's intention to reach out to the whole of Africa. This was followed by an action plan designed to invigorate engagement at all levels throughout the continent, which Turkey had previously largely ignored. In 1999, however, earthquakes and a financial crisis caused Turkey to postpone most of its goals regarding Africa.<sup>2</sup>

With recovery from the earthquakes and an improving economic situation, and in the context of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) victory in the 2002 legislative elections, the focus on Africa was revived.<sup>3</sup> 2005 was declared to be the 'Year of Africa', and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then prime minister, became Turkey's first head of government to visit SSA countries, with trips to Ethiopia and South Africa. There followed a carefully organized and intensive programme by the government and civil society groups to expand Turkish influence in the region. In 2008 President Abdullah Gül hosted the first Turkey–Africa Cooperation Summit. Gül visited Kenya and Tanzania in 2009, and Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2010.<sup>4</sup>

The current political and economic climate in Turkey suggests that the country is likely to remain favourably disposed towards continued engagement with SSA. A rapidly depreciating currency, an ebbing ability to attract foreign direct investment and the ongoing turmoil in Iraq, Turkey's second largest export market,<sup>5</sup> and Syria have strengthened the desire to seek political influence and markets beyond the country's traditional partners. Turkey's deteriorating relations with traditional regional powers such as Egypt and with the European Union (EU) can be seen as catalysts for Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's announcement, in early 2015, that Africa would be an increasingly important region for Turkish interest.<sup>6</sup> The countries of SSA offer the potential for support for Turkey's global policies, which sometimes compete with those of both Western and emerging countries. Turkey has

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<sup>1</sup> The Observatory of Economic Complexity (MIT), <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/>.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Wheeler, 'Ankara to Africa: Turkey's Outreach since 2005', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 18, No 1 (April 2011), pp. 45–46.

<sup>3</sup> Meral and Paris (2010) note that: 'What drives the AKP is not an ideological realignment but a rational and pragmatic attempt to maximize Turkish national interests'. See Ziya Meral and Jonathan Paris, 'Decoding Turkish Policy Hyperactivity', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No 4 (October 2010), p. 85. See also Mehmet Yilmaz, 'Conceptual Framework of Turkish Foreign Policy in the AK Party Era', *Turkish Review*, Vol. 1, No 1 (October/November 2010), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48. See also Mehmet Özkan and Birol Akgün, 'Turkey's Opening to Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 48, No 4 (2010), pp. 533–34.

<sup>5</sup> In 2014 Turkish exports to Iraq fell by more than 10 per cent from their 2013 level, primarily as a result of the precarious security situation arising from ISIS militancy.

<sup>6</sup> 'PM calls four main targets for Turkish commercial counsellors', *Daily Sabah*, 5 January 2015.

also become economically competitive in certain sectors of the SSA economy; as a result, emerging economies in particular have taken note of Turkey's growing role in the region.

This paper considers the nature, balance and effectiveness of Turkey's expanded relationships in SSA. It examines the extent to which Turkish 'soft' power in SSA is a matter of policy design and therefore is reaping the benefits of strategic engagements, or whether it is instead the result of a confluence of cultural, trade and humanitarian engagements that have fed into the policy agenda.

### Box 1: SSA and the mythology of the Ottoman Empire

The AKP's foreign policy probably has an element of wishing to restore the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire. This may have relevance to most of North Africa, but there is little validity as regards SSA. None the less, some of the recent Turkish writings on Africa include fanciful assertions about Ottoman control and influence in SSA.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the Ottomans only exercised brief control over some enclaves along the Red Sea coast of present-day Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan, and along the Nile in the northernmost part of Sudan. They relied on local Muslim allies to counter Christian forces in Ethiopia. In the 16th century the Prince of Mombasa briefly recognized the Ottomans' authority, until the Portuguese forced them out of East Africa. The Ottomans also had a loose alliance and defence pact dating back to 1575 with the Kanem-Bornu Empire around Lake Chad.<sup>8</sup>

The sending of emissaries to, and occasional signing of, agreements with local authorities in parts of the region did not demonstrate the exercise of Ottoman authority or governance. In reality, the Ottoman Empire's efforts there largely ended in failure.<sup>9</sup> Turkey has no intention of reviving its administration in Africa, and African governments certainly have no interest in anything other than normal economic, cultural and political relations with Ankara. Any parallels drawn between Turkey's policy in SSA today and the Ottoman period are highly misleading.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Mehmet Özkan, 'Turkey's "New" Engagements in Africa and Asia: Scope, Content and Implications', *Perceptions*, Vol. 16, No 3 (Autumn 2011), p. 119, which states that Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Niger and Chad 'lived under Ottoman reign'.

<sup>8</sup> In his speech to African delegates at the May 2012 Turkey-Africa Media Forum in Ankara, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç underscored the Ottoman ties with SSA.

<sup>9</sup> Halil İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600*, London: Phoenix, 1973, p. 44.

## Turkey's Priorities in Africa: Old Interests, New Engagements?

Turkey's growing engagement in Africa has been part of a broader goal to position itself as a global player with a complex foreign policy, and its involvement in SSA is both wide and multifaceted. The pursuit of economic opportunities through trade is one of the most important drivers of the recent focus on the region, and this has raised questions as to what is in the relationship for the SSA countries. Turkey has thus been forced to pay greater attention to other aspects of the relationship, such as investment and aid, which offer more direct benefits for the countries concerned in view of their limited exports to Turkey.

This is important, as Turkey's Africa strategy is also about enhancing its influence on the world stage. Turkey looks to the SSA countries for support on issues such as a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (see below), Cyprus, counterterrorism, measures to counter sea piracy, the hosting of Expo 2020<sup>10</sup> and disputes at the World Trade Organization.

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Turkish aid, which emphasizes capacity-building – especially vocational training in Turkey – and the construction of schools and hospitals, is an important complement to diplomatic and trade engagement to further the country's political and economic interests. The role of Turkish civil society and humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is equally important, though not a direct consequence of government policy. In comparison with the footprints of other emerging powers in SSA, civil society and NGO participation represents a greater share of Turkey's engagement, which suggests a less deliberate or coordinated engagement than Ankara's foreign policy rhetoric would assert.

Turkey's interests in SSA are as diverse as the opportunities and states across the region. This is reflected in the various depths of engagement and the range of successes. Somalia, for instance, has been prominent in Turkey's Africa policy, with a long and, latterly, deepening engagement. While this has been partly driven by civil society, the Turkish government has taken an unexpectedly active role – despite the current lack of significant economic opportunities that Somalia presents (see Box 2). Somalia's government has welcomed this prioritization, which seems to be driven by an affinity of religion and perceived history as well as by Turkey's desire to have influence at a strategic location near the confluence of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

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<sup>10</sup> The Turkish city of İzmir was unsuccessful in its bid to host the World Expo in 2020, with Dubai being chosen in 2013 as the host city.

## Strategies of Engagement

### Politics, security and diplomacy

Turkey's accession to the European Union (EU) appears to be an increasingly unrealizable aspiration. Furthermore, shifting alliances in the Middle East have also had a significant impact on Ankara's engagement in the region. Relations with Egypt soured when that country's first democratically elected president, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi, was ousted in 2013, and President Erdoğan has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the regime in Cairo led by Abdel Fatah el-Sisi.<sup>11</sup>

Ideologically, the governments of Turkey and Egypt have fundamentally contrasting views on how to deal with the current crises in Syria and Yemen. In particular, the Turkish government is strongly opposed to the Iranian-backed regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and Houthi insurgents in Yemen. Egypt, on the other hand, considers Sunni extremism to be its main threat, and views Assad as a useful bulwark against the advance of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS),<sup>12</sup> although el-Sisi cannot be seen to be supporting Iranian interests for fear of upsetting its Gulf creditors. However, Turkey's previously frosty relations with Saudi Arabia have warmed significantly since the ascent of King Salman to the throne at the beginning of 2015, with Riyadh's view of the geopolitical situation in the Middle East becoming more aligned with Ankara's.

The ever more fluid geopolitical situation in the Middle East and North Africa, with its resultant shifting alliances, suggest that Turkey is likely to continue its intensive diplomatic efforts in SSA as the country seeks a more secure partner base.

Turkey has engaged in an ambitious programme to establish diplomatic missions in SSA countries, and has encouraged the reciprocal opening of embassies in Ankara. Embassies were established in Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania in 2009, adding to its existing missions in the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Sudan. Further embassies were opened in 2010 (in Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali and Uganda), 2011 (The Gambia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe), 2012 (Burkina Faso, Gabon, Namibia and Niger) and 2013 (Chad, Guinea, Djibouti and Eritrea). When Turkey opened its embassy in Eritrea in 2013, it became the first country in the world to have ambassadorial representation in every country in the Horn of Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Some of Turkey's embassies in the region have only two or three Turkish nationals on the staff, and it has had difficulty staffing all the missions. In some cases, for example in Angola, Cameroon and Chad, the embassy is more symbolic than substantive, although trade with these countries has risen in recent years. While there are limits to what these small missions can do to advance Turkish interests, they still allow an ambassador to have personal interaction with the country's government officials and other elements of society. Turkey also uses honorary consulates where it does not have an embassy. Noting in early 2012 that his country had opened 22 embassies in Africa over a two-year period, Davutoğlu,

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<sup>11</sup> 'Turkey's Erdoğan: Morsi is Egypt's president, not Sisi', *Newsweek*, 22 May 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Turkey appears to be becoming increasingly drawn into the war in Syria, with Turkey's air strikes on ISIS targets inside Syria on 24 July 2015 signalling a 'tactical shift' in its position in regions geopolitics. See, 'Turkey carries out first ever strikes against Isis in Syria', *The Guardian*, 24 July 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Ozakan, M. and Orakci, S. (2015) 'Viewpoint: Turkey as a "political" actor in Africa – an assessment of Turkish involvement in Somalia', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 343–352.

then foreign minister, stated that the government wanted to make Turkey a centre of stability in surrounding regions, 'providing new vision, new horizon for international relations'.<sup>14</sup>

Although only South Africa had an embassy in Turkey as recently as 1997, there are currently 25 SSA embassies in Ankara.<sup>15</sup> That countries such as Mauritania or The Gambia have established missions is perhaps surprising in view of their minimal commercial interaction with Turkey; however, each has a majority Muslim population. The presence of Somalia specifically reflects Turkey's significant political interest in conflict resolution in that country.<sup>16</sup> Turkey is apparently covering some of the operating costs of the embassies of poorer countries, and in the case of Somalia it is paying the entire cost.<sup>17</sup>

Turkey received the support of all but two African countries in securing a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2009–10; and it again lobbied African countries intensively when seeking a seat for 2015–16, arguing that a seat for Turkey would be another voice for Africa.<sup>18</sup> Turkey failed in this most recent bid, however.<sup>19</sup> Such diplomacy is conducted by Turkish embassies in SSA and when senior Turkish officials visit the continent. It was expected that Turkey would use its presidency of the G20 in 2015 as a vehicle to further its interests in SSA. Prime Minister Davutoğlu stated in late 2014 that many African governments had asked Turkey to be their 'voice' within the G20, in which South Africa is otherwise the continent's sole representative.<sup>20</sup>

Between 2009 and 2011 there were 37 visits to Africa made by either the Turkish president, prime minister, parliamentary speaker or minister of foreign affairs. Over the same period, there were 76 visits to Turkey by African leaders of similar rank. In 2012 some 300 journalists from 54 African states took part in the Turkey–Africa Media Forum in Ankara, and in 2014 Turkey and its African partners organized over 20 high-level bilateral visits.<sup>21</sup>

Between 2009 and 2011 there were 37 visits to Africa made by either the Turkish president, prime minister, parliamentary speaker or minister of foreign affairs. Over the same period, there were 76 visits to Turkey by African leaders of similar rank.

The Second Turkey–Africa Partnership Summit was held in November 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. President Erdoğan and foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu headed the Turkish delegation, which included around 200 business representatives. Some 30 African countries were represented, seven at presidential level.<sup>22</sup> The participants issued a general declaration called the 'New Model of Partnership for the Strengthening of Sustainable Development and Integration', but did not issue a final communiqué. They also postponed discussion of a shortlist of joint projects until a later date.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 10 February 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Gabon has also committed to opening an embassy in Turkey in 2015. See 'Gabon to open embassy in Ankara in 2015', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 12 May 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Turkey has mediated between the governments of Somalia and Somaliland, and has offered to act as a mediator between Mogadishu and al-Shabaab.

<sup>17</sup> Comment to author by senior Somali government official in Washington on 17 May 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Bülent Arınc, remarks at the Turkey-Africa Media Forum, Ankara, May 2012.

<sup>19</sup> In the 2014 vote, Turkey lost more than half of the 151 votes it received in its successful bid in 2008. See, 'Why the UN rejected Turkey's bid for a Security Council seat?', *The World Post*, 28 October 2014.

<sup>20</sup> 'Turkey committed to a more inclusive G20 for an interconnected world', *Daily Sabah*, 14 November 2014.

<sup>21</sup> 'Experts: Turkey to make ties with Africa', *Daily Sabah*, 4 January 2015.

<sup>22</sup> The presidents of Benin, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe attended, as did the vice presidents of Burundi and South Africa and the prime ministers of Algeria, Gabon and Swaziland. There was also ministerial level representation from Angola, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan. The chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, was also present.

<sup>23</sup> 'Turkish ambassador to Ethiopia gives press briefing', *World Bulletin*, 17 December 2014; African Union, press release, 21 November 2014.

Following visits to Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti in January 2015, Erdoğan stated that Turkey would increase aid, investment and diplomatic links with Africa.<sup>24</sup> Erdoğan was at that time reported to be planning to visit nine more African countries in 2015,<sup>25</sup> and he has received President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon and President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire in Ankara in recent months. However, the Turkish government's decision to send only ambassadorial-level representation to the high-profile Asian African Conference Commemoration in Indonesia in April attracted criticism from some sections of the media.<sup>26</sup>

Turkey has engaged selectively and modestly in African conflict zones. In 2010 it co-chaired with Egypt the International Donors' Conference for the Reconstruction and Development of Darfur, held under the auspices of the then Organization of the Islamic Conference (now the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – OIC), and pledged \$65–70 million in humanitarian assistance. (Oil-and-gas-rich Qatar pledged only slightly more – \$88.5 million – at the 2013 Darfur donors' conference held in Doha).<sup>27</sup> In November 2014 Turkey's parliament voted to deploy peacekeeping troops to UN-approved EU missions in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR).<sup>28</sup> As of May 2015, Turkey was contributing 58 personnel to six UN peacekeeping operations in Africa: the CAR (1), Mali (1), Darfur (26), Liberia (10), South Sudan (12) and Côte d'Ivoire (8).<sup>29</sup>

Turkey has the seventh highest number of naval vessels in the world, and these are becoming more frequent visitors at SSA ports. In the first half of 2014 the Turkish navy conducted port visits to 28 African countries, which included the first rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by a Turkish vessel in 148 years – described by the prime minister's office as a display of Turkey's 'hard-power elements in a soft-power mission'.<sup>30</sup> Another convoy of Turkish warships docked at Port Sudan in April 2015 for joint exercises with the Sudanese navy.<sup>31</sup> Turkey has since 2009 contributed frigates to the US-led, multinational Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden. Turkey commanded CTF-151 for part of 2009, and its ships call regularly at SSA ports.

### Box 2: Turkey and Somalia

Turkey has a long history of engagement in Somalia. From 1991 Turkey participated in the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), and in 1993 Lieutenant-General Çevik Bir was appointed force commander of UNOSOM II. However, the failure of this mission resulted in a great deal of Somali animosity towards both Bir and Turkey.<sup>32</sup> In 2010 Turkey hosted the UN-sponsored Istanbul Conference on Somalia, and the Turkish people donated some \$300 million to combat famine in the country. In 2011 an emergency ministerial-level meeting of the OIC executive committee convened in Istanbul to discuss the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia. The second Istanbul Conference on Somalia, held in 2012 under the banner 'Preparing Somalia's Future: Goals for 2015', further progressed Somalia's political transition.<sup>33</sup> More recently, in March 2015 Turkey hosted the eighth

<sup>24</sup> 'Erdoğan: We cannot remain silent on Africa', *Daily Sabah*, 27 January 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Fehim Tastekin, 'Erdoğan's Africa tour', *Al-Monitor*, 28 January 2015; Salim Avci, 'Africa prime destination for Erdoğan in bid to boost good relations', *Today's Zaman*, 11 January 2015.

<sup>26</sup> 'A 'golden opportunity' missed: why Turkey didn't show up in crucial Asia and Africa conference', *Al Bawaba*, 26 April 2015, <http://www.albawaba.com/business/golden-opportunity-missed-why-turkey-didnt-show-crucial-asia-and-africa-conference-686900>.

<sup>27</sup> Press Release, United Nations Development Programme, 21 September 2014, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2014/09/21/qatar-donates-88-5-million-for-darfur/>.

<sup>28</sup> 'Turkey to deploy peacekeeping troops to Africa', *World Bulletin*, 21 November 2014.

<sup>29</sup> 'UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country', 31 May 2015, [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/may15\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/may15_3.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> 'Turkey's Africa policies blend hard, soft power', *Al-Monitor*, 6 April 2014.

<sup>31</sup> 'Turkish warships dock in Sudan for joint drills ahead of Sudanese elections', *International Business Times*, 6 April 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Ozakan, M. and Orakci, S. (2015) 'Viewpoint: Turkey as a "political" actor in Africa – an assessment of Turkish involvement in Somalia', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 343–352.

<sup>33</sup> Mehmet Özkan, 'Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa', in *Emerging Powers in Africa*, LSE IDEAS Special Report 016, 2013, pp. 45–50.

round of talks between the governments of Somalia and Somaliland as they sought to reach agreement on issues such as security, piracy and illegal fishing.<sup>34</sup> Turkey's humanitarian support for Somalia in recent years has been interpreted by some observers as having enhanced the country's standing in a way that has fostered considerable economic opportunities across Africa.<sup>35</sup> For example, a Turkish company was recently awarded a 20-year contract for the reconstruction and maintenance of Mogadishu's port.<sup>36</sup>

Erdoğan is one of only two heads of government to have visited Somalia in recent years.<sup>37</sup> His high-profile visit to Somalia during the famine of 2011 was the first by a non-African head of government in almost two decades. During the visit, he signed a 49-year agreement with the then Somali transitional federal government (TFG) to enhance the education system in the country through the work of the Nile Organization (affiliated with Erdoğan's former ally Fethullah Gülen, the influential Turkish scholar and Muslim preacher now living in exile in the United States).

In 2012 Ahmet Davutoğlu, then foreign minister, stated that Turkey was ready to lend military assistance in order to help establish political stability in Somalia.<sup>38</sup> Turkey has provided \$8.84 million for the restructuring of the Somali army and police force, and trains Somalis in military academies in Turkey.<sup>39</sup> It also offered to mediate between the TFG and the militant al-Shabaab organization, but the latter rejected this proposal. While most Somalis have praised Turkey's role in their country, al-Shabaab has been strongly critical.<sup>40</sup> The organization claimed responsibility for a bomb attack on Turkish embassy staff in Mogadishu in July 2013, in which three people were killed.<sup>41</sup> Three Turkish construction workers were injured in an attack on the Turkish embassy in April 2014.<sup>42</sup> In January 2015, prior to Erdoğan's visit, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a suicide car bombing at a hotel in Mogadishu where some 70 members of the Turkish advance delegation were staying; at least five people were reported to have been killed in the attack, although none was apparently a member of the visiting delegation.<sup>43</sup>

Much of the Turkish effort in Somalia is driven by its charities and NGOs, with the government having an oversight role. The programmes are often funded by business figures. Turkey's health ministry, in coordination with the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), manages the largest hospital complex in Somalia, and the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) is in the process of constructing an orphanage which will be the largest in the Horn of Africa.<sup>44</sup> Turkey is also building schools and clinics, and it is currently involved in a project to improve Mogadishu's water supply. In 2012 Turkish Airlines became the first (and only) major carrier to serve the Somali capital in over 20 years; it now operates four flights there a week. Prior to the resumption of services, the Turkish government undertook work to secure the airport and installed air traffic control equipment. As well as repairing mosques damaged by war, Turkey's state directorate of religious affairs, or Diyanet, is currently building a new mosque in Somalia as part of its international programme.<sup>45</sup> There is also an active Turkish–Somali business organization. Somalis have been impressed that, unlike other expatriates, most Turks in Mogadishu live among the Somali people, rather than in secure walled compounds. A senior Somali official told the author of this paper that Turkey is apparently motivated by a real desire to help Somalia, and that 'in any event, the TFG can't turn down such generous help'.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>34</sup> 'Somali unity talks resume in Turkey', *Mareeg Media*, 2 March 2015.

<sup>35</sup> See for example 'The ascent of Turkey's Ahmet Davutoğlu', *Al Jazeera*, 1 September 2014.

<sup>36</sup> 'Somali port to get facelift', *The Africa Report*, 23 October 2014.

<sup>37</sup> The impression that this diplomatic gesture made in Somalia cannot be overstated; some Somali parents now name their sons 'Erdoğan' and their daughters 'Istanbul'. See 'The unlikely love affair between two countries', *BBC News Magazine*, 15 December 2014.

<sup>38</sup> 'Davutoğlu: Turkey ready to give military assistance to Somalia', *Today's Zaman*, 24 February 2012.

<sup>39</sup> 'Turkey's aid unlike others, says Somali envoy to Ankara', *Daily Sabah*, 12 November 2014; 'Somalia's long-lost brother Turkey is here to rebuild the country', *Daily Sabah*, 9 June 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Oliver Stuenkel, 'Turkey Joins the 'Struggle for Africa'', *Postwesternworld*, 19 January 2012; 'Turkish Intervention in Somalia as Selfish, Says Al-Shabaab', *Africa Review*, 5 February 2012.

<sup>41</sup> 'Al Shabaab claim attack on Turkish mission in Somalia, three dead', Reuters, 27 July 2013.

<sup>42</sup> 'Three injured in rocket attack on Turkish embassy in Somalia', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 11 April 2014.

<sup>43</sup> 'Suicide attack in Somali capital ahead of Erdoğan visit', *Daily Mail*, 22 January 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Ozakan, M. and Orakci, S. (2015) 'Viewpoint: Turkey as a "political" actor in Africa – an assessment of Turkish involvement in Somalia', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 343–352.

<sup>45</sup> 'Turkey launches international mosque-building program', *Voice of America*, 10 March 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Comment made in Washington 17 May 2012.

## Trade and investment

Trade, especially exports, is one of the most important drivers of Turkey's recent emphasis on Africa. None the less, while Turkish exports to SSA have grown impressively since 2007, as at 2013 they remained only about 2.7 per cent of the total value of Turkey's exports worldwide, and well below exports to North Africa (6.6 per cent) – see Table 1. Furthermore, although Turkey's imports from SSA are increasing in value terms, they actually decreased as a percentage of total imports between 2007 (1.7 per cent) and 2013 (1.0 per cent). Bilateral trade figures with SSA countries have fallen short of government targets since 2012, and their current standing means that the targets set for 2015 and 2023 are unlikely to be reached.<sup>47</sup> When the figures for North Africa are excluded, Turkish–African trade remains surprisingly small for a rapidly developing market with a population approaching 1 billion.

**Table 1. Turkey's trade with Africa, \$ million**

Region	2007			2013		
	Exports	Imports	Total	Exports	Imports	Total
SSA	1,946	2,821	4,767	4,103	2,522	6,625
World	107,271	170,062	277,333	151,802	251,661	403,463
SSA (%)	1.8	1.7	1.7	2.7	1.0	1.6
North Africa	4,029	2,285	6,314	10,041	3,508	13,549
North Africa (%)	3.8	1.3	2.3	6.6	1.4	3.4

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute.

Turkey's major exports to SSA are manufactured goods, iron and steel products, food and consumer products, textiles, cement,<sup>48</sup> plastics and a range of industrial products. Turkey's then defence minister, İsmet Yılmaz, was reported in August 2014 to have informed the country's parliament that the Turkish defence industry aimed to secure weapons contracts in markets including SSA countries.<sup>49</sup> Imports from SSA consist mostly of primary products such as cotton, minerals, precious stones, coal, leather, oilseeds, timber and foods. Little of Turkey's crude oil is sourced in Africa (7 per cent in 2012<sup>50</sup>), but the country is becoming increasingly active in SSA's burgeoning energy sector. In recent years, Turkey has signed energy cooperation agreements with countries such as Cameroon, Kenya, Niger and Sudan,<sup>51</sup> and in August 2014 the energy and natural resources ministry stated that Angola was among the Turkish Petroleum Corporation's (TPAO) priorities for investment in crude oil extraction.<sup>52</sup> Also in 2014 Turkey's Karadeniz Holding reached an agreement with the state-owned Electricity Company of Ghana for the construction of two floating power stations that would supply approximately 20 per cent of Ghana's electricity requirements over a 10-year period. As of mid-2015, however, the arrangement was subject to a constitutional challenge at Ghana's Supreme Court.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> 'Africa prime destination for Erdoğan in bid to boost good relations', *Today's Zaman*, 11 January 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Limak Holdings A.S., a large Turkish conglomerate, has committed to building multimillion dollar cement production plants in Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique. See 'Turkey's company says it will invest \$1 bln in power generation in 2015', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 9 April 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-company-says-will-invest-1-bln-in-power-generation-in-2015.aspx?pageID=238&nID=80819&NewsCatID=348>.

<sup>49</sup> 'Turkey is boosting weapons exports with a focus on Africa, here's who benefits', *International Business Times*, 5 August 2014.

<sup>50</sup> US Energy Information Administration (2014).

<sup>51</sup> 'Turkey plans to invest in Africa's energy industry', *Daily Sabah*, 18 August 2014.

<sup>52</sup> 'Turkey's TPAO to seek oil in Angola', *Daily Sabah*, 21 August 2014.

<sup>53</sup> 'UPDATE 1-Turkey's power-ship maker Karadeniz to supply electricity to Ghana', Reuters, 17 June 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/17/turkey-ghana-power-idUSL5N00Y1WC20140617>; 'Ghana-Turkey power deal in legal limbo', *World Bulletin*, 20 June 2015, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/160961/ghana-turkey-power-deal-in-legal-limbo>.

To date, Turkey has signed bilateral investment treaties with 12 countries in SSA.<sup>54, 55</sup> It also signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with Mauritius in 2011, and is currently in negotiations with Cameroon, the DRC and Seychelles,<sup>56</sup> although some of these negotiations have proceeded slowly. Furthermore, Turkey aims to sign an FTA with the East African Community by 2019.<sup>57</sup> South Africa has hitherto resisted Turkish advances to sign an FTA, on the grounds that competition under such an arrangement risked undermining its industrial and employment objectives. None the less, there have been some indications that South Africa may accelerate talks on the matter after 2016.<sup>58</sup> As shown in Table 2, trade between the two countries decreased substantially in value between 2006 and 2012; Turkey's trade deficit with South Africa also diminished over the same period. Of all the countries in the region, South Africa is Turkey's major commercial competitor, and it is likely that South Africa views the relationship in that context.

**Table 2: Turkey's top five trading partners in SSA, \$ million**

Country	2006			2012		
	Exports	Imports	Total	Exports	Imports	Total
South Africa	598	1,793	2,391	382	1,290	1,672
Nigeria	83	380	463	439	113	552
Ghana	33	57	90	224	303	527
Ethiopia	92	24	116	395	47	442
Sudan	217	8	225	280	11	291

Source: International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 2013*.

The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) has been particularly active in efforts to expand trade and commercial activity in Africa. It hosted the first Turkey–Africa Foreign Trade Bridge in 2006, and has held annual events since then. The 2011 Trade Bridge brought together some 600 Turkish business representatives with 350 African counterparts from 54 countries. TUSKON and affiliated organizations have organized more than 200 trade and investment delegations to Africa in recent years.<sup>59</sup> However, TUSKON's president was reported in early 2015 as having said that the confederation's recent initiatives to promote trade – in particular Turkish exports to Africa – have been hampered by the refusal of Turkish embassies in Africa to grant visas to respected business people.<sup>60</sup> This apparently reflected tensions between the AKP administration and the Gülenist movement, to which TUSKON has ties.

There are conflicting figures on Turkey's foreign direct investment in SSA. Addressing the Africa–Turkey Partnership Ministerial Review Conference at the end of 2011, foreign minister Davutoğlu put his country's investments in Africa at some \$1 billion.<sup>61</sup> Deputy premier Bülent Arınç stated in 2012 that Turkey had invested \$1.5 billion in Ethiopia alone.<sup>62</sup> An official of the Ethiopian Investment

<sup>54</sup> Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania.

<sup>55</sup> Ethiopian Investment Agency, 'Bilateral Investment Treaties', 30 October 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Nail Ersoy, 2013, *Free trade agreements of Turkey*, PowerPoint presentation, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Economy, Ankara, <http://yoikk.gov.tr/upload/IDB/FTAsCompatibilityMode.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> 'Turkey cashes in on outreach to Africa', *Mail & Guardian*, 1 February 2013.

<sup>58</sup> 'Turkey, South Africa to increase trade links', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 26 November 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Mustafa Gunay (TUSKON Secretary-General), 'Turkey-Africa relations', speech at Chatham House, 14 April 2011; 'Turkey Africa Trade Bridge to Yield 350 Mln in One Day', TUSKON press release, 16 December 2011.

<sup>60</sup> 'Government oppression of confederation hurts Turkish exports to Africa', *Today's Zaman*, 10 March 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, remarks at the opening of the Africa-Turkey Partnership Ministerial Review Conference, Istanbul, 16 December 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Arınç, remarks at the Turkey-Africa Media Forum.

Agency noted in 2014 that Turkey had latterly invested about \$1.2 billion in Ethiopia in recent years, particularly in the textile industry, compared with Chinese investment of \$836 million over the past decade.<sup>63</sup> Turkey's Eximbank has also provided Ethiopia with \$1.4 billion in finance for the 400-km Awash–Kombolcha–Weldia rail project.<sup>64</sup> As of mid-2013, Turkish firms were involved in 64 projects in Sudan, with a total value of \$2.2 billion.<sup>65</sup> An agricultural cooperation agreement signed by the two governments in 2014 has greatly increased the scope for further Turkish investment in Sudan.<sup>66</sup> As regards Somalia, Turkey's foreign minister noted in late 2014 that private Turkish companies were expected to invest more than \$100 million over the next two to three years just in Mogadishu.<sup>67</sup> The leading sectors for Turkish investment in SSA are construction, followed by manufacturing and agricultural vehicles.<sup>68</sup>

It is primarily small and medium-sized Turkish companies that are attracted to investing in SSA countries.<sup>69</sup> Larger firms have apparently concluded that the market is too small to be worth their effort. Although the amount of investment in SSA is relatively modest, Turkish companies are willing to take greater risks than are most Western ones, and appear to be increasingly interested in pursuing opportunities there. Small Turkish companies seem to be especially active, and may by accident or design be developing a particular niche in sectors such as construction and information and communications technology.<sup>70</sup> Turkey has signed agreements on avoiding double taxation and on investment protection with Ethiopia, Sudan and South Africa.<sup>71</sup>

In 2008 the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and the Union of African Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Commodity Exchanges agreed to establish the Turkish-African Chamber, the aim of which is to increase economic dialogue and cooperation. Member countries include Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda. However, the organization seems to have accomplished little so far. Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) has also encouraged the establishment of bilateral business councils with African partners. More than 20 such councils have been established, with Cameroon, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Mozambique and Senegal all opening offices in 2014–15.

In 2009 Turkey's Bank Asya signed an agreement with the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD), a subsidiary of the Islamic Development Bank, whereby Bank Asya acquired from ICD a 40 per cent stake in the Senegal-based Tamweel Africa Holding SA. Tamweel holds shares in Islamic banks in Senegal, Guinea, Niger and Mauritania. The \$15 million investment gave Bank Asya a stake in each of these banks, and permitted it to operate in the Islamic banking sector throughout the region. However, Bank Asya announced in January 2015 that it was to sell its stake to ICD.<sup>72</sup> (Established by supporters of Fethullah Gülen, the bank had suffered a damaging run on deposits in 2014 in the

<sup>63</sup> 'Turkey outdoes China in terms of Ethiopia investment', *World Bulletin*, 11 September 2014.

<sup>64</sup> See for example 'Ethiopia-Turkey business forum opens in Addis Ababa', *World Bulletin*, 11 December 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Republic of Turkey Ministry of Economy, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> 'Turkey, Sudan sign agriculture cooperation protocol', Anadolu Agency, 28 April 2014.

<sup>67</sup> 'Turkey-Africa: solidarity and partnership', *New Era*, 21 November 2014, <http://www.newera.com.na/2014/11/21/turkey-africa-solidarity-partnership/>.

<sup>68</sup> 'Turkey Makes Inroads into Africa', *Turkish Weekly*, 20 December 2011.

<sup>69</sup> There are over 400 Turkish small and medium enterprises operating in Africa. See 'Turkey cashes in on outreach to Africa', *Mail & Guardian*, 1 February 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Turkish ICT companies are expected to play a role in the World Bank-funded fibre optic Central African Backbone (CAB) project; see 'Congo Brazzaville, Turkey to collaborate on Central African Backbone project', *Biztech Africa*, 16 February 2015, <http://www.biztechafrica.com/article/congo-brazzaville-turkey-collaborate-central-afric/9723/#.VZUjOrtVhHx>.

<sup>71</sup> 'Taxation and Investment in Turkey 2014: Reach, Relevance and Reliability', Deloitte Report, <http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Tax/dttl-tax-turkeyguide-2014.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> 'Turkey's Bank Asya to sell Tamweel Africa Holding stake', Reuters, 9 January 2015.

context of the political feud between Gülen and Erdoğan.<sup>73</sup> Subsequently, the Turkish authorities announced their intention to assume control of Bank Asya.<sup>74</sup>

Turkish Airlines has expanded its services to SAA countries to take advantage of growing business and tourist travel. Whereas in 2008 it only served Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Lagos and Johannesburg, by 2015 the airline was flying to 26 countries in SSA.<sup>75</sup>

### Aid

SSA was the first region to begin receiving Turkish aid, with \$10 million distributed by the State Planning Organization among The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan in 1985. After a hiatus arising from the earthquakes and domestic financial difficulties after 1999, Turkish development assistance to SSA resumed in 2004. Aid to Africa increased from \$31 million in 2006 to \$52 million in 2008. By the end of 2011, Turkey had undertaken 113 development assistance projects in 37 African countries. In 2013 Africa was the largest overall beneficiary of aid from the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), receiving 33.7 per cent of the agency's total disbursement.<sup>76</sup>

According to Development Initiatives, Turkey's provision of \$1.6 billion for global humanitarian emergencies meant that it was the world's third largest government donor of such assistance in 2013, behind only the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>77</sup> As foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu was reported to have described Turkey as having become a 'power of conscience' through its humanitarian actions.<sup>78</sup>

In 2008 TIKA initiated an agricultural improvement programme for 13 SSA countries. Turkey's assistance tends to focus on Muslim countries in West and Central Africa, as well as on those with which it has historical ties – such as Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan.<sup>79</sup> However, TIKA's presence across the rest of the region is increasing; it has recently announced plans to distribute 1 million copies of the Quran to countries across the continent.<sup>80</sup> The agency maintains overseas coordination offices in Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan,<sup>81</sup> from which it coordinates development projects in 37 countries.<sup>82</sup>

Turkey became the 25th non-African member of the African Development Bank in 2008. In addition, it helps to fund programmes in Africa run by international organizations such as the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and Red Crescent.

<sup>73</sup> 'Turkey's government: split personality', *The Financial Times*, 1 October 2014.

<sup>74</sup> 'UPDATE 2-Turkish authorities take over Islamic lender Bank Asya', Reuters, 29 May 2015.

<sup>75</sup> Turkish Airlines operates services to Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia, as well as to multiple destinations in Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania. The airline was also due to commence flights to Conakry (Guinea), Luanda (Angola) and Maputo (Mozambique) by the end of 2015.

<sup>76</sup> 'Africa gets lion's share of Turkish foreign aid', *Daily Sabah*, 7 November 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Development Initiatives, 'Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014'.

<sup>78</sup> 'Turkey's Africa policies blend hard, soft power', *Al-Monitor*, 6 April 2014.

<sup>79</sup> Outside of the members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Turkey is the largest aid donor to Somalia. Turkey has been offered entry to the DAC, but has so far preferred to remain an observer. Non-DAC members of the OECD are not required to report official development assistance (ODA) by sector. Furthermore, Turkish aid is generally and overwhelmingly bilateral, which is at odds with the DAC's preferred multilateral method of disbursement.

<sup>80</sup> 'TIKA to distribute 1 million copies of the Quran in Africa', *Daily Sabah*, 12 July 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) Overseas Offices, <http://www.tika.gov.tr/en/overseasoffices>.

<sup>82</sup> Mehmet Özkan, 'Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa', in *Emerging Powers in Africa*, LSE IDEAS Special Report 016, 2013, pp. 45–50.

Scholarships have become an important part of Turkish aid to the region. Between 2003 and 2012 more than 5,500 students from SSA countries were awarded scholarships at Turkish universities.<sup>83</sup> There are about 13,000 African students studying in Turkey, with 1,000 new scholarships being made every year.<sup>84</sup> To give an example, of 100 international students at Zirve University, a Gülen-affiliated institution in Gaziantep, almost half are Africans, primarily from Nigeria and Kenya.<sup>85</sup> Nearly every country in SSA now receives a few scholarships, and several are major beneficiaries. In 2011 the Turkish government and private charities arranged for more than 350 Somalis to study in Turkey, as well as in Sudan and Egypt. Djibouti received 10 Turkish scholarships for the 2012/13 academic year, and 16 in 2013/14. Kenya receives 20 annually, and Sudan received 22 in 2013/14. Turkey offered 55 scholarships to students from Nigeria between 2008 and 2011, and 12 to Nigerian students in 2012/13. Such scholarships are at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.<sup>86</sup> There were some 70 Mozambican students studying in Turkey on scholarships as of 2015, according to a Turkish official.

### Humanitarian and civil society organizations

At the forefront of Turkish civil society engagement in Africa is the 'Gülen movement' – referred to by the exiled followers of Fethullah Gülen as *Hizmet*, meaning service for others. The movement began as a faith-based, non-political, cultural and educational effort inside Turkey, and it has since spread globally. It puts a premium on interfaith dialogue, and once had close ties to the AKP – with which it agreed on the need to take advantage of globalization's opportunities. The movement's financial support comes from a tradition of Turkish and Islamic charity, especially provided by the business community.<sup>87</sup> Gülenists have been sharply criticized in some quarters for pursuing their own agenda and seeking to place supporters in key government and security positions in Turkey.<sup>88</sup>

The movement is best known in SSA for the high-quality schools – primary and secondary institutions, as well as one university – that Turkish business people inspired by Gülen have financed. There is no central organization in charge of the schools, which are fee-paying private institutions with rigorous academic standards, and which follow the curriculum of the host country. There are close ties between the schools and Turkish sponsors doing business in the countries where they are located.<sup>89</sup> A key to their success is the network that they provide. Graduates in the DRC, for example, often speak Turkish and help drive Turkey's commercial interests.

There are approximately 96 Gülen-affiliated schools in SSA countries.<sup>90</sup> Nigeria has the most (17), and is the location of the only Gülen-affiliated university in Africa – the Nigerian Turkish Nile University in Abuja. Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania all have six or more schools.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Volkan Ipek, 'The 2011 landing of Turkey on Somalia: The "State to People" aspect of Turkish foreign policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa', *European Scientific Journal*, May 2014.

<sup>84</sup> 'Africa, Turkey to decide joint projects', *World Bulletin*, 17 December 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Author's interview with Adnan Kisa, president of Zirve University, in Gaziantep, 14 December 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Scholarship figures are from Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website under relations with individual countries, [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr).

<sup>87</sup> Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, New York: Springer, 2010, pp. 42–81. Ahmet T. Kuru, 'Changing Perspectives on Islamism and Secularism in Turkey: The Gülen Movement and the AK Party,' in *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, Conference Proceedings, 25–27 October 2007, London.

<sup>88</sup> 'Erdoğan at Bay,' *The Economist*, 25 February 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, pp. 97–101.

<sup>90</sup> Estimate based on author's field research for a book to be released in September 2015 titled *Hizmet in Africa: The Activities and Significance of the Gülen Movement*, published by Tsehai Publishers. It is difficult to determine a precise number, because some schools have separate primary and secondary operations, claiming to be two schools, while others operate with one principal and identify as one school. In addition, new schools regularly appear, often without any publicity.

<sup>91</sup> Based on author's field research in South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Senegal in 2012 and 2013, as well as on discussions with Gülen-affiliated school teachers and administrators from a number of other African countries.

The influence of the Gülenist movement on Turkey's Africa policy has been such that it was credited by many observers with pioneering the opening up to the continent, but the recent schism in relations between Erdoğan and Gülen has led some within the Turkish establishment to call for a revision of foreign policy.<sup>92</sup> President Erdoğan has even urged foreign governments, including those in SSA, to close down Gülen-affiliated projects.<sup>93</sup> At the Second Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit in November 2014, Erdoğan warned the assembled African leaders of the 'hidden agendas' of the Gülenists. Pro-government media sources have reported that Erdoğan has managed to convince Gabon and Senegal to shut down Gülenist-run schools, and that the Republic of the Congo and Somalia have implemented processes for their closure,<sup>94</sup> although these schools appear to remain open. However, President Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique has expressed his support for the movement, announcing in mid-2015 that he intended to visit the Gülenist school in Maputo from which his son had graduated.<sup>95</sup> Côte d'Ivoire's deputy education minister was reported as having informed one news agency that Erdoğan's stance against Africa was 'similar to colonial states' in seeking an 'educationally backward' continent.<sup>96</sup>

Turkey's non-governmental Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), which provides relief following wars and natural disasters, began its activities in Africa in 1996 with the delivery of aid to Somalia. It now operates in 35 SSA countries.<sup>97</sup> It has, for example, constructed hundreds of water wells; and as of March 2014, IHH had performed more than 76,000 cataract-removal operations in Africa.<sup>98</sup> The organization also conducts Qurban campaigns to ensure that impoverished Muslims receive meat from animals that have been slaughtered in accordance with Islamic requirements.

Kimse Yok Mu ('Is Anybody There' – KYM) is a non-governmental, Gülen-inspired relief organization, established after the 1999 earthquakes in Turkey, which has expanded globally. Unlike the Gülen-affiliated schools, KYM has a formal, hierarchical structure and organized mechanism for fundraising. Between 2006, when it began assistance to Africa, and 2013, KYM provided about \$65.4 million to 45 countries. KYM assistance to Africa reached its highest point in 2011, but it has since declined; in 2013 it distributed about \$17.5 million to 43 African countries, with most aid going to development projects, health, education, water wells and support for orphans.<sup>99</sup> During Ramadan KYM offers *iftar* (fast-breaking meals) and food packages in many SSA countries.<sup>100</sup> The AKP government's efforts against the Gülenist movement have even extended to KYM, which has had its bank accounts frozen and which was reported in April 2015 to be under investigation for alleged terrorist activities.<sup>101</sup> None the less, KYM, which *inter alia* aims to build 1,000 new schools in Africa by 2020, has subsequently signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union on efforts to increase cooperation in aid, development and education.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>92</sup> 'Turkey needs to take foreign policy away from the street: Ex-envoy', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 5 January 2015.

<sup>93</sup> 'Erdoğan's African mission and dismantling Turkish schools', *Today's Zaman*, 29 January 2015.

<sup>94</sup> 'Turkey's allies mobilizing support against Gülen Movement's schools abroad', *Daily Sabah*, 19 May 2015.

<sup>95</sup> 'Mozambican president: I will continue to support Turkish schools', *Today's Zaman*, 5 June 2015.

<sup>96</sup> 'Erdoğan's stance against Africa similar to colonial states', *Today's Zaman*, 8 February 2015.

<sup>97</sup> Humanitarian Relief Foundation, [www.ihh.org.tr/map/index.html#](http://www.ihh.org.tr/map/index.html#).

<sup>98</sup> Humanitarian Relief Foundation, 'IHH to carry out 6,000 cataract operations in Africa' undated, <http://katarakt.ihh.org.tr/en/main/region/africa/15/ihh-to-carry-out-6000-cataract-operations-in-/2169>.

<sup>99</sup> *Kimse Yok Mu Africa Report 2006–2012 and KYM 2010–2013 Africa Report*.

<sup>100</sup> Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*, pp. 101–3; Ihsam Yilmaz, 'Civil Society and Islamic NGOs in Secular Turkey and Their Nationwide and Global Initiatives: The Case of the Gülen Movement', *Journal of Regional Development Studies*, 1 June 2010, pp. 124–125.

<sup>101</sup> Alp Aslandogan, 'Dimensions of the authoritarian drift in Turkey', *The World Post*, 24 April 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alp-aslandogan/dimensions-of-the-authori\\_b\\_7119430.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alp-aslandogan/dimensions-of-the-authori_b_7119430.html).

<sup>102</sup> 'African Union and Kimse Yok Mu sign landmark agreement to further aid efforts in Africa', *Today's Zaman*, 27 April 2015.

The Turkish Red Crescent has been active in selected SSA countries. It established a \$5 million field hospital in Darfur in 2006, and has continued to provide health services there. In 2008 it developed a modern pharmacy at a hospital in the Chadian capital, N'Djamena. Its biggest SSA effort was in 2011, when it mobilized a major national campaign of assistance for victims of famine in Somalia.<sup>103</sup> The Turkish branch of Doctors Worldwide (DWW) has been active since 2000 in SSA countries such as Kenya, Sudan, the DRC, Ghana and Sierra Leone. One team has provided medical services in the CAR since 2007, and the organization provided non-food relief to vulnerable people in the country in 2014. Turkish DWW operates a hospital in Mogadishu, and was responsible for training Somalia's first medical specialists.<sup>104</sup> Following the bomb attack on Turkish embassy staff in July 2013, DWW issued a press statement confirming that the attack would not deter the organization from helping the people of Somalia.<sup>105</sup>

Since 2005 the African Institute of the Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies (TASAM) has hosted an annual Turkey-Africa Congress, the aim of which is to promote a better understanding of Africa in Turkey and the expansion of Turkish culture in Africa. The Congress has become a forum for academics, government officials, business figures and representatives of civil society organizations to discuss a wide range of issues. Most recently, the Congress was held in Khartoum (2012), Accra (2013) and Istanbul (2014).

Founded in 2008, the Center for African Studies at Ankara University is the only Turkish academic unit that specializes in the region. Gazi University offers a Master's programme in African and Middle Eastern studies, and Kadir Has University hosts a university research center for the Middle East and Africa. A number of universities have begun to offer graduate programmes in African studies, among them Izmir Economy University, Kadir Has University and Kirklareli University.<sup>106</sup> The Center for Strategic Research, the International Strategic Research Institution and the Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University are gradually developing expertise on SSA.

### Box 3: The Islamic link

Turkey's Diyanet, the directorate of religious affairs, housed in the office of the prime minister, puts Islamic policies into practice.<sup>107</sup> In 2006 it hosted, in Istanbul, the first Religious Leaders Meeting of African Continent Muslim Countries and Societies, attended by religious leaders from 21 African countries. Its aim was to build religious ties and project Turkish foreign policy. In 2009 the Diyanet invited 300 Muslim students from countries including Mozambique, Togo, Mauritania, Sudan, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire to study as imams in Turkey.<sup>108</sup> Addressing the second Religious Leaders Meeting in 2011, Erdoğan urged greater consultation among Muslim countries and warned against Islamophobia. Participants agreed to establish a permanent secretariat within the Diyanet to ensure follow-up. The Diyanet, the budget and reach of which has extended significantly in recent years, has served to distinguish Turkey from other emerging powers engaged in SSA, in that its policy goes beyond humanitarianism and economic interests.<sup>109</sup>

Turkey is a member of the OIC, together with 22 SSA countries for which Erdoğan has given particular attention to aiding development. As prime minister in 2005, he toured six OIC members – Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Niger and Senegal – and launched a programme to improve food security and the cotton industry in these countries. Turkey has also collaborated with the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Center for Development of Trade to encourage industrialization in Africa.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Turkish Red Crescent, 'Somali Humanitarian Aid Operation', 18 August 2011.

<sup>104</sup> 'Doctors Worldwide Turkey trains Somalia's first medical specialists', *Todays Zaman*, 16 February 2014.

<sup>105</sup> 'Doctors Worldwide helping people of Somalia', *Todays Zaman*, 26 August 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Ipek, 'The 2011 landing of Turkey on Somalia'.

<sup>107</sup> Thijl Sunier et al. *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs in a Changing Environment*, Amsterdam: Universiteit Utrecht, 2011, p. 137.

<sup>108</sup> Wheeler, 'Ankara to Africa', p. 50. Özkan and Akgün, 'Turkey's Opening to Africa', p. 538.

<sup>109</sup> Özkan, 'Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa'.

<sup>110</sup> Uchehara, 'Continuity and Change in Turkish Policy toward Africa', p. 60.

## Conclusion

The breadth of Turkey's involvement in SSA suggests that its intention is to engage for the long term. While its trade with SSA countries is very modest when compared with that with the countries of North Africa, aid to SSA is growing rapidly and Turkey's commercial, educational and cultural presence is impressive – as is its political commitment in countries such as Somalia and Sudan. The link between Turkey's engagement and its business community is close, but more intriguing is the role of NGOs such as TUSKON, IHH and DWW, as well as that of the Gülen-affiliated groups. While the government under the AKP has had a general coordinating role in the activities of these organizations, it is not always clear to what degree it has encouraged them to intervene in a country – and how much control it has had over their efforts. In the case of Turkey's extraordinary engagement in Somalia, Erdoğan and the AKP clearly played a critical role. The Gülen movement has been crucial in expanding Turkey's profile in Africa, and the high-profile falling-out between the AKP and the Gülenists significantly complicates the future of relations in the NGO sphere – and could prove detrimental for further Turkish engagement in SSA.

There are a number of challenges that have faced Turkey in expanding its efforts in SSA. Both sides have much to learn about the other. In 2011 the first issue of Ankara University's *Journal of African Studies* put the matter starkly: 'To the Turkish public, and particularly to Turkish intellectuals, Africa remains a great enigma, a dark continent full of obscurities. The current state of knowledge and of perspectives on Africa is very limited, poor and prejudiced.'<sup>111</sup> While Turkey is slowly making efforts to remedy this, the situation has not improved significantly.

The inconclusive general election in June 2015 – which produced Turkey's first hung parliament since 1999, with the outcome largely seen as reflecting a defiant electorate opposing the strengthening of Erdoğan's authority, suggests that Turkey may become more insular and less likely to expand its efforts in SSA in the near future.

Earthquakes and financial problems set back the speed of Turkey's expansion into SSA at the turn of the century. While the seismic tremors may have subsided, ongoing economic and security crises in Ankara are likely to mean Turkish engagement in SSA will diminish in the short term. The Turkish economy has latterly been suffering a combination of slow growth, a sharply depreciating lira, weakening bond and stock markets and a dearth of investor confidence. Furthermore, the rise of ISIS has caused a massive refugee influx,<sup>112</sup> and Kurdish nationalist movements have been newly strengthened. The inconclusive general election in June 2015 – which produced Turkey's first hung parliament since 1999, with the outcome largely seen as reflecting a defiant electorate opposing the

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<sup>111</sup> 'Editorial', *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 1, No 1, November 2011, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> Turkey now hosts the largest number of refugees in the world as a result of the crisis in Syria and Iraq. See 'UN: Turkey hosts largest number of refugees in the world', Anadolu Agency, 18 June 2015.

strengthening of Erdoğan's authority<sup>113</sup> – suggests that Turkey may become more insular and less likely to expand its efforts in SSA in the near future.

Whatever the outcome of Turkey's political deadlock – a fresh parliamentary election was scheduled for November 2015 – it is likely that Turkey will remain extensively engaged in SSA. President Erdoğan has demonstrated a continuing interest in the region, confirmed by his participation at the Second Turkey–Africa Partnership Summit in November 2014 in Equatorial Guinea, as well as by visits to Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia in January 2015 (with more visits apparently planned for later in the year). Furthermore, business and cultural connections are too deeply embedded to allow interest in Turkey's Africa strategy to cease.

Erdoğan has been the chief architect of Turkey's renewed engagement in SSA. While a change in government could cause Turkey to reduce, for example, its huge political and humanitarian engagement in Somalia – a project seen as close to the president's heart – Ankara will almost certainly continue to retain its strong commercial relations with SSA countries.

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<sup>113</sup> It is widely believed that if the AKP had won a 'supermajority' in the elections, Erdoğan would have sought to amend the constitution in order to give the presidency, hitherto a largely ceremonial role, much greater political power. Although the Turkish constitution stipulates that the president must remain non-partisan during election campaigns, Erdoğan campaigned vigorously for his party.

## About the Author

**David Shinn** has been teaching at the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, since 2001. He previously served for 37 years in the US Foreign Service, with assignments at embassies in Lebanon, Kenya, Tanzania, Mauritania, Cameroon and Sudan, and as ambassador to Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. He has a PhD in political science from George Washington University.

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