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Deciphering Turkey—Africa Summits

Scope, Content and Results

Mehmet Özkan | ORCID: 0000-0001-5256-9790

Joint War Institute, National Defence University, Istanbul, Turkey

mozkan@msu.edu.tr

Serhat Orakçı | ORCID: 0000-0002-3924-4294

Humanitarian and Social Research Center (INSAMER), Istanbul, Turkey

serhatorakci@gmail.com

Abstract

Over the last two decades, international summits have gained great importance for regional and global actors in terms of developing relations with African countries. China, India, Japan, the United States, European countries and Russia have conducted various summits and business forums to develop political, economic and military relations with Africa. In 2005, Turkey emerged as a new actor when its foreign policy opened up to Africa. It was a strategic partner to the African Union in 2008, has conducted two Turkey–Africa summits—in 2008 in Istanbul, and in 2014 in Malabo—and the third summit was held again in Istanbul in December 2021. This article analyses the Istanbul and Malabo declarations comprehensively to evaluate Turkey’s foreign policy discourse on Africa. Moreover, it examines Turkey’s Africa policy implementations and achievements in the continent through the lens of summits.

Keywords

Africa – Turkey – international summits – Istanbul Declaration – Malabo Declaration

1 Introduction

Why are there so many African summits? The answer requires some contextualisation. Russia, Turkey, USA, India, China and the EU have all organised Africa summits in one form or another. Many international organisations, from the UN to regional organisations, have joined this trend in the last decade, to discuss Africa in special forums, summits and gatherings. Each country is probably moved by different specific motives and agendas, but their overall aim is the same: to upgrade relations with African countries and establish a space for themselves in Africa's international outlook. Since 2002, Turkey has followed suit. It organised the first Turkey–Africa Summit in 2008 in Istanbul. This article explains Ankara's motives in opening up to Africa and evaluates its summit diplomacy vis-à-vis Africa. Framing Turkey's Africa policy in terms of its achievements, we argue that Turkey–Africa summits have made a good contribution to relations in discovering potential and setting future goals. Nevertheless, promises and signing a document do not equal full implementation.

2 Summits as a Promoter in Developing Relations

It is now almost ritual that global players organise summits with African countries. This could be considered part of the global interest in the continent; however, at first it is more a way of connecting and making contact with Africa than doing business. Summit diplomacy is a type of conference diplomacy engaged in by international governments, in which the heads of state meet for face-to-face negotiations and acquaint themselves with each other (Weilemann, 2000). Since mid-2000, it has become commonplace to hear of meetings and forums that bring together Africa's presidents, ministers and high-level officials with developed nations, emerging and aspiring partners or multilateral organisations. The Russia–Africa Summit 2019, UK–Africa Summit 2020, Middle East–Africa Summit 2020, Africa–France Summit 2020, Turkey–Africa Economic and Business Forum 2020, Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 2021, Russia–Africa Summit and Economic Forum 2022 are just some of the recent events and they are in no way an exhaustive list of scheduled or planned meetings. The Covid-19 pandemic has visibly decreased, or at least, postponed such gatherings. Nevertheless, the questions remain: Why are summit meetings so dominant in Africa's international politics? What is it about Africa that so many organisations, countries and entities are eager to have such meetings? And are they good for Africa?

We believe that there are several explanations for the rise and predominance of African summitry in global politics. First, Africa has been the centre of international attention since mid-2000 and summit meetings represent a way of outside actors showing serious interest in the continent. Many consider Africa attractive because of its natural resources, economic potential and young population. Its appeal has turned the continent into a theatre of great opportunity and emerging countries are competing for access to Africa's resources as well as to its relatively untapped market. This puts Africa in a favourable position to enhance its international status and thus increase its agency (Chipaike and Knowledge, 2018).

Generally, since the Cold War ended, and more specifically after early 2000, the US and Europe have dominated global politics, including African politics. The emergence and visibility of China and other BRIC countries on the international stage, as well as that of Turkey, Brazil and South Korea, have shown that this has positive implications for agency, since African countries now have considerably more leeway in choosing their partners. As a result, a number of African countries are showing growing signs of assertiveness in their negotiation for development assistance as they leverage their natural resources. Summits are one of the forums where African countries try to increase their leverage at an international level. As Brown (2012: 188g) has rightly argued, 'future work on African agency [is] be able to engage seriously with the continent's role in international politics in a way that presents Africa as actor and not just acted upon; and a historical agent, and not just history's recipient'. As long as international interest in Africa continues, summit meetings are likely to become more frequent and important. And the more such meetings occur, the better established the institutional structure of Africa's relations with other countries will be.

Second, summits are very helpful for countries in getting to know each other and discovering areas of mutual interest. Africa was neglected in international politics as an arena of cooperation during the Cold War, but the post-Cold War era opened new market possibilities and other benefits for many countries on the continent. As with the rise of other non-Western countries in global politics, Africa has become an area that should be known better and its complexities understood at social, political and economic levels.

Third, Africa is emerging into an area of confrontation and possible competition between different international actors. An unspoken China–US rivalry and Turkey–France competition is already visible on the continent. A slowly emerging Russian influence is likely to counter interest from various actors in coming years. In East Africa, several Gulf countries, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are trying to weaken the influence of Turkey and Qatar there.

Recent tensions in the eastern Mediterranean triggered the Turkey–France contention in West Africa (Ozkan, 2020). Ankara’s recently proactive West Africa policy and its intervention in Libya are implicated in this. Whereas Turkey has in the past interacted with Africa through soft-power policies, it now sees Africa as a geopolitical playground in which it can take on France or any other country unflinchingly. The Turkey–France rivalry is likely to affect Turkey–EU relations, too. It may create an opportunity for possible cooperation with other European powers, such as Italy or Spain, especially on security and migration issues, breaking the monopoly of France as the EU anchor in the region.

To sum up, summit diplomacy has been a prominent feature in African politics and it is likely to remain so for a while. African actors are variably using summit diplomacy with other countries, ‘as a means to orient this interest to (i) attract investments through forum shopping in a competitive environment, (ii) diversify economic partners to reduce dependency, (iii) tactically claim back their economic policy space, and (iv) for some, to escape at least temporarily from political isolation by getting more visibility and expanding networks’ (Soule, 2020: 637–638).

3 A Synopsis of the Turkey-Africa Summits

Turkey held three summits at which African leaders gathered—in Istanbul, Malabo and again in Istanbul. During the Istanbul summit in 2008, the Istanbul Declaration was adopted, and the Malabo Declaration was announced after the second summit gathering in 2014, in Equatorial Guinea’s capital, Malabo. Turkey’s third Africa summit was recently gathered in Istanbul despite COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore the last summit projected 2022–2026 period, this section of the paper will look at the first and second summits comprehensively from the angle of what was promised in the declarations and what achievements have been made in Turkey–Africa relations since. A summary of the declarations, along with implementation plans, is given in order to follow Turkey’s steps on the continent.

3.1 *The Istanbul Declaration and Its Framework of Cooperation, 2008*

The Turkey–Africa Summit held on 18–21 August 2008, in Istanbul, was the first important step by Turkey in focusing its foreign policy on establishing relations with the African continent. The event took place three years after Turkey officially announced its ‘opening up to Africa’ policy and declared 2005 the ‘Year of Africa’ (Ozkan and Akgun, 2010). An important development before the

summit was that Turkey had been accepted as Africa's strategic partner in the African Union (AU). The focal points of the Istanbul summit were a common future, cooperation and solidarity between the participating parties. Moreover, both Turkish and African partners agreed on the implementation of a concrete programme of action based on equality, mutual respect as well as reciprocal benefits.

The Istanbul Declaration adopted by the parties initially demarcated certain principles that were required by both sides, with respect to the UN Charter, the Constitutive Act of the AU, and other universally recognised principles, such as respect for universal jurisdiction, state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Moreover, the declaration reminded all states that they should aspire to an equal footing in international affairs, peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, contribution to growth, the eradication of poverty and sustainable development. In this vein, there was also a special emphasis on globalisation and Africa's marginalised status within the global economic system (MFA, 2008a).

The diversity (and idealism) of the agenda contained in the declaration indicated the high expectations and potential for both sides to improve relations. The Istanbul Declaration framed certain expectations in many designated areas for further cooperation between Turkey and African countries: inter-governmental cooperation; trade and investment; agriculture and agribusiness; rural development; water resource management; small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); health; peace and security; infrastructure, energy and transportation; culture, tourism, education, media, information and communication technology, and the environment.

3.1.1 Inter-Governmental Cooperation

The cooperation framework for policy implementation written up in the declaration firstly stressed the importance of inter-governmental cooperation as a vehicle for promoting partnership between the parties. The exchange of high-level official visits, inter-governmental dialogue, sharing experiences to support beneficial partnerships, technology transfer, capacity-building and promoting developmental projects were the main priorities for establishing a diplomatic footing (MFA, 2008b). After the summit, Turkey boosted its diplomatic efforts. At a government-to-government (G2G) level, Turkey's presence on the continent increased in the form of several high-level visits from Turkey to African countries and from African countries to Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan officially visited 31 countries on the continent within the 15 years between 2005 and 2020 in pursuit of the implementation framework. Moreover, in the same period the number of Turkish embassies on the con-

continent rose from 12 to 42 (AA, 2020b); African embassies in Ankara increased to 32, although from a very limited level.

3.1.2 Trade and Investment

Trade and investment have been central to Turkey–Africa relations, as confirmed by the Istanbul Declaration’s legal framework to promote balanced and increased trade between both sides. The upbeat tone of the declaration encouraged the parties to foster foreign direct investment (FDI) in both directions. The declaration also recognised the preeminent role of the private sector in developing economic relations and for that reason urged the establishment of joint business councils for better coordination. In this regard, the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEİK) established 43 business councils across the continent, and the volume of trade between Turkey and African countries has reached USD 25 billion dollars annually since 2008 (TABEF).

3.1.3 Development Assistance

From the angle of development assistance, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) is an important institution within the Istanbul Declaration. The framework of TIKA initiatives on the continent has included programmes of vocational training as well as the development of SMEs, agriculture and agribusiness, rural development and water resources management (Ozkan, 2017a). After it opened its first branch on the continent opened in Addis Ababa, in 2005, TIKA opened a further 22 coordination offices in Africa (TIKA 2021). The institution become an important image-maker for Turkey’s presence in Africa as a result of various community development activities in the continent. As a provider of development aid, Turkey’s TIKA has implemented projects from Senegal to South Africa within a highly diverse range of sectors, such as constructing clinics, hospitals, schools and vocational training centres.

3.1.4 The Health Sector

Bilateral cooperation in the health sector has highlighted Turkey’s support for eradicating poverty, overcoming malnutrition and epidemics (including HIV/AIDS), tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases in Africa. Turkey has signed health cooperation agreements with more than 20 African countries on various occasions. In accordance with the health agreements, Turkey’s Ministry of Health has established three sizeable hospital complexes: in Sudan’s Nyala city in the Darfur region; in Somalia’s capital, Mogadishu; and Niger’s capital, Niamey. Furthermore, the Red Crescent of Turkey and many Turkish civil society organisations have implemented health projects in the form of mobile health clinics, examinations, surgery programmes, drug donations and training workshops for local health workers.

3.1.5 Peace and Security

With respect to peace and security, Turkey contributed to the AU Peace and Security Architecture, the African Standby Forces and UN Peacekeeping Operations in Africa, and assisted with training along with close cooperation with the war on terrorism. Among these contributions, Turkey plays a role in the NATO-accredited Centre of Excellence-Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) and the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT). It has provided troops for UN peacekeeping operations in Mali, Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire and Central African Republic and has participated in maritime security initiatives and rescue efforts in the Horn of Africa against piracy (MFA, 2014a). Turkey has also constructed a military training centre (TURKSOM) in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, to train military staff and special commando forces of the Somalian National Army (SNA). In addition, Turkey has played a key role in Somalia's security sector in AMISOM (African Mission in Somalia) (AA 2020a).

3.1.6 Infrastructure, Energy and Transport

Infrastructure, energy and transport, another area of cooperation in the declaration, has involved the development of land, maritime and air transportation infrastructure as well as the establishment of business partnerships in order to execute physical infrastructure projects. Turkish construction companies have signed several contracts for new infrastructure projects, and Turkish Airlines (THY) now connects 53 different destinations on the continent with Istanbul. In addition, efforts have been made to create better access to renewable, clean energy sources, non-agricultural biofuel and alternative energy sources. Recently, Turkey has become a purchaser of Africa's energy sources, by importing oil and liquid natural gas (LNG) from countries like Nigeria and Algeria.

3.1.7 Culture, Tourism, Education and Science and Technology

In the areas of culture, tourism, education, science, technology, youth activities, sports and cultural exchange, Turkey has increased its scholarship programmes and cooperation between Turkish and African universities, established research centres and initiated a twinned cities programme. The Turkish state provides monthly allowances, free tickets, accommodation, health insurance and free undergraduate and postgraduate university education to African students. Similarly, African Studies programmes have become popular in Turkish academia. In different cities of Turkey, around 10 research centres focusing on African Studies have been established. Further, the participants agreed to strengthen collaboration in the field of tourism and in the fight against the illegal trafficking of cultural artifacts.

3.1.8 Media and ICT

Cooperation in the field of media, and information and communications technology (ICT), has involved exchange programmes for media staff, capacity-building in information technology, and the publicisation of African Union and African and Turkish common priorities and achievements in the media. Following the summit, Turkey set up a continental office of the Anadolu News Agency (AA) in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. This move was an attempt to de-westernise the media dependency of Turkey and Africa. Today, Turkish newsmakers located in Addis Ababa as well as Dakar, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Khartoum and Abuja produce independent media content. Additionally, the Anadolu News Agency organises training programmes combining practice and theory on journalism and online media for African journalists.

3.2 *Malabo Declaration and Joint Implementation Plan, 2014*

The second summit between Turkey and African states was held in 2014 in Equatorial Guinea's capital, Malabo. It took place in accordance with the Istanbul Declaration's follow-up mechanism, which specified that new summits should be held every five years and ministerial review conferences every three years. In Malabo, a Joint Implementation Plan for the period 2015–2019 was accepted by the participants. The Malabo Declaration did not vary much from the Istanbul Declaration except in opening new fields of cooperation and adding several articles: whereas the Istanbul Declaration has nine articles of cooperation, the Malabo Declaration has 13. Climate change, the empowerment of women, livestock breeding, migration, cybercrimes, and conflict resolution and mediation appeared as new fields for cooperation. The Malabo Declaration also extended the dimensions of previous areas of cooperation.

The declaration emphasised further collaboration in peace and security and conflict resolution via the exchange of expertise, information and training. It also projected further cooperation in combatting the crimes of human trafficking and illegal migration, and in the fight against terrorism that threatens the stability of some nations in the continent. Similar to the Istanbul Declaration, the new declaration encouraged further direct trade relations between the parties and promoted the social and economic development of Turkey and Africa in areas of infrastructure, industrialisation, tourism and SMEs (MFA, 2008a).

The declaration specified that Turkey would support Africa's continent-wide priority programmes, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa initiative (AIDA), the African Mining Vision (AMV), the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and the Comprehensive Africa

Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). Regarding climate change, it has adopted UN's Framework Convention.

In respect of Africa's food security, the Malabo Declaration stipulates that the parties will cooperate in the field of livestock breeding and enhancement of livestock productivity by using advanced technology. Furthermore, manufacturing, especially the cotton and textile industries, was seen as another area for cooperation. Tourism and cultural interactions, private sector investment, media exchange programmes and collaboration in the fields of capacity-building programmes for African youth, science, technology and higher education are other areas touched on in the declaration.

In the Malabo Declaration, the participants have agreed to jointly cooperate in the health sector to combat diseases and establish efficient and developed health systems on the continent. The empowerment of women to develop African women's economic, social and legal status was another highlighted field of cooperation.

The Joint Implementation Plan adopted for the period 2015–2019 designated equality, mutual trust and respect as must-follow principles for the parties. In order to establish better relations, the plan has encouraged interaction between Turkey and African states through ministerial consultation meetings, inter-parliamentary gatherings, friendship groups in national assemblies and consultations within global institutions, such as the UN, IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

At a regional level, the Malabo Declaration endorses close cooperation between Turkey's TİKA and Africa's regional economic communities and civil society organisations operating in the field of agriculture, rural development, health, education and environment (MFA, 2014b).

3.2.1 Peace and Security

In Malabo, 10 policies were adopted under peace and security. Sharing information and experience, training, exchange programmes and joint research projects were projected for collaboration in security. Like the Istanbul Declaration, the implementation plan requires Turkey's financial support for AU Peace Support Operations and UN peacekeeping operations in Africa and the AU Peace and Security Architecture. Through joint mechanisms and cooperation between Turkish and African organisations, the plan has projected cooperation in the fight against terrorism, transnational organised crimes, drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal migration, money laundering, forgery, fraud and cybercrime. It also agrees that the parties will work together in maritime security, the defence industry, military fields, combating national disasters as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear disasters.

After the Malabo summit, one of the biggest achievements in the peace and security sector was building a military training centre, called *TURKSOM*, in Mogadishu, Somalia. This was built at a cost of USD 50 million to train Somalia's national army along with the African Union Mission in Somalia (*AMISOM*) forces. According to Turkey's ambassador to Mogadishu, more than 15,000 Somali military forces were trained by Turkish military personnel since the centre started operating in 2017. Moreover, Turkey has provided special commando training for some units of the Somali army in the Turkish city of Isparta (*AA*, 2021). In 2018, Turkey announced its support of USD 5 million to the G5 Sahel joint force that comprises five nations battling against terrorism and trafficking in the Sahel region. During the Turkish International Defence Fair in 2021, G5 Sahel and Turkey signed a defence deal in Istanbul (*G5 Sahel*, 2021).

3.2.2 Trade and Investment

In order to strengthen Turkey–Africa relations, further cooperation in the fields of trade and investment was seen as an important aspect of the Malabo summit. In this regard, the implementation plan suggested 13 policies to improve trade relations and the investment environment for both sides. They include joint trade fairs and exhibitions; a joint database; establishing Africa–Turkey business councils; establishing industrial zones; cooperation in the housing, finance and banking sectors, establishing umbrella institutions for young African business people and women entrepreneurs. Although the plan projected a trade and investment volume of USD 50 billion between Turkey and African countries by 2019, this aim has not yet been reached. This fact reflects the idealism of summit agreements against the reality of their implementation, which moves slowly due to procedures and various setbacks.

In accordance with decisions taken in Malabo, Turkey is organising Turkey–Africa Economic and Business Forums periodically with the African Union, in order to regulate and develop trade relations between Turkey and the continent. The first forum gathered trade and economy ministers from 42 African countries and over 2,000 participants, in Istanbul in 2016. The second forum was held in 2018 under the theme 'Investment in the sustainable future together'. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the third session of the forum was held online in 2020. At a regional level, to deepen Turkey's economic and trade relations with West Africa, Ankara set up the Turkey–ECOWAS Business and Economic Forum in 2018 (*AA*, 2018).

3.2.3 Socioeconomic Development and Food Security

To promote Africa's socioeconomic development and food security, the Malabo Declaration highlighted 15 policies for cooperation in the field of agriculture, agribusiness, rural development, water resources management and SMEs. The roadmap of the policies included exchanging information, experience and experts, as well as mutual visits at the level of related ministries and preparing a master plan for Africa in agriculture. The plan further stressed cooperation on seed sowing, cultivation, combat against desertification, erosion, drought and the negative impacts of climate change, management of soil and water resources, livestock breeding, animal diseases, phytosanitary experiments, species rehabilitation and biological diversity, offshore fishing and organic farming.

Turkey considers agriculture a strategic sector in improving its relations with African countries. In this regard, in 2017, Turkey organised the first Turkey–Africa Agriculture Ministers Meeting and Agribusiness Forum in Antalya and inked deals with six African countries concerning agriculture, fishery and livestock. Some 40 ministers of agriculture from 54 African countries participated, along with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union Commission. Food security, nutrition, financing and credit opportunities, agroindustry and development issues were discussed (FAO, 2017). Turkey's official development agency, TİKA, has offices in Africa that provide agricultural tools, seeds, fertilisers and pesticides to local farmers in order to improve their agriculture capacity.

3.2.4 Infrastructure, Energy, Mining and Transportation

The joint implementation plan of the Malabo Declaration adopted policies in the fields of infrastructure, energy, mining and transportation, supporting the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), to develop the energy industry and renewable and clean energy sources, such as solar, wind, geothermal and biofuel. To explore oil and natural gas for the benefit of both sides, the plan promoted cooperation between state-owned national energy companies and private sector companies as well as the exchange of know-how, expertise and training for technical staff. Moreover, the plan included developing the institutional and technological capacity of the energy and mining sector in Africa as well as laying oil and gas pipelines.

Turkey–Africa cooperation on energy shows signs of increase since the Malabo Summit in 2014. Turkey imports oil and LNG from African markets. Algeria has become Turkey's fourth biggest gas exporter, and 90% of Turkey's imports from Nigeria constitute LNG (Kalehsar, 2020). In 2017, oil and mineral-rich Chad invited Turkish companies into the country for oil extraction; similarly,

Somalia invited Turkey to explore for oil in its seas. Moreover, Turkey signed a maritime deal with the UN-recognised Government of National Accord of Libya, which allowed for the creation of an exclusive economic zone, from Libya's northeast coast to Turkey's southeast coast, and for the exploration of oil.

The Malabo Declaration also supported the electricity sector, either to increase access of Africans to electricity or to accelerate industrialisation in Africa. Floating powerships of the Turkish company Karadeniz Energy Group have been supplying low-cost electricity for nine African countries: mobile floating power plants that generate electricity from oil or LNG have been supplying Guinea, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Sudan and Zambia (Collins, 2021).

Furthermore Turkey has agreed to expand the development of aviation infrastructure as well as increase air traffic between Turkey and the continent.

3.2.5 Culture, Tourism and Education

On culture, tourism and education, cooperation between the academic institutions of both sides is encouraged, as well as training youth in diplomacy, joint projects in culture and tourism, education, science and technology, twin cities and twin municipalities, the promotion of language training, the exchange of students and instructors, establishing Turkish-African universities in Africa and Turkology departments in African universities. In accordance with the summit declaration, Turkey has increased its investment in Africa's education sector by opening Yunus Emre cultural institutes and Maarif schools across the continent.

The Turkish Maarif Foundation became an important soft-power tool after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. In 2017, Turkey hosted education ministers from 38 African countries at a conference in Istanbul and signed cooperation agreements to improve Turkey's ties with African countries on education (*TRT World* 2017). The role of the Maarif Foundation in Africa has since expanded and Turkey has established new schools or taken over FETÖ (Gülenist Terror Group) schools established on the continent after the 1990s. The foundation organised three education fairs in Sudan, Tunisia and Mali in 2018. Today, the Turkish Maarif Foundation runs almost 150 schools and 20 dormitories in 25 different African countries (Akgun and Ozkan 2020). The opening of more schools in different countries is underway.

In recent years, Turkey has increased scholarship opportunities for African students, providing free high school and university education. According to the Turks Abroad and Related Communities Presidency (YTB) data, between 2010 and 2019, 5,259 students from African countries benefitted from the Turkish

scholarship programme; in 2019 alone, 1,147 African students received a scholarship (YTB, 2020). The Diplomatic Academy of the Turkish Foreign Ministry has organised training programmes for young African diplomats from countries such as Somalia, Madagascar, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria and Namibia (MFA, 2021). The Yunus Emre Institute, in collaboration with Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, published a collection of African proverbs in 38 African languages (YEE, 2021).

Some joint projects towards youth and sport were framed within youth exchange programmes (including the disabled), competitions and sports games between Turkish and African clubs.

3.2.6 Media, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Media and ICT were further developed following the Malabo Declaration. Television programmes, films and dramas produced by Turkish and African producers have been broadcast, African youth are being trained in journalism and media, and Turkish-Africa media forums have been considered as a means of strengthening Turkey–Africa cooperation.

3.2.7 Water Management, the Environment and Health

The implementation roadmap accepted by signatories in Malabo underscored modernising irrigation methods, river basin management planning, water law and policy, geotechnical expertise for groundwater and drilling water wells and meteorological observation systems under the title of water management. Training and joint projects in the fields of environmental protection, water pollution, waste management, water management, marine and air pollution were also projected for further collaboration between parties. Moreover, cooperation in fighting malnutrition and epidemics (such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, Ebola, tuberculosis), maternity health, family planning and neonatal resuscitation, exchange visits of health ministers and experts, and support for Turkish and African NGOs working in the health sector, were all projected in order to develop Turkey–Africa cooperation in the field of health.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Turkey was one of the earliest countries to provide medical equipment for several African nations. It sent fleets of cargo planes carrying masks, ventilators and other medical items to combat coronavirus to Somalia, Sudan, South Africa, Uganda, Mozambique, Eswatini, Namibia, Botswana, Rwanda, Angola and South Sudan. To assist with local protective mask production, state-run aid agency TİKA sent sewing machines and fabrics to Mozambique and Eswatini (AA, 2020c). Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, several Turkish NGOs were also active in providing Covid-19 aid to African countries.

Comparing the two summits, it is possible to say that the Malabo Declaration is more diverse than the Istanbul Declaration and that its articles widen the framework of Turkey–Africa relations. Rather than being a generous wish list, they determined roadmaps and provided measures for evaluating the steps taken to establish cooperation between the parties. Viewed through the prism of these summits, Turkey’s agenda on the continent seems quite coherent. Therefore, the summits may be considered a good indicator of a better understanding and improvement in Turkey–Africa relations.

4 An Assessment of Turkey–Africa Relations, 2005 to 2020

In 2005, nobody would have imagined the current status of relations between Turkey and Africa. At most, what one could have hoped for was a relationship between the two with limitations, based mostly on economic activities. Ankara’s Africa policy and the response from African countries went beyond expectations. Indeed, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government’s Africa policy has been hands down the most successful aspect of Turkish foreign policy over the past decade. Ankara has nurtured its political, economic and sociocultural ties with Africa effectively and gradually established itself as a long-term stakeholder. The details of this success can be examined in five periods, each of them indicating a different level of understanding of and approach to the continent.

The period between the AK Party’s rise to power in 2002 and the designation of 2005 as the Year of Africa was the preliminary stage of Turkey’s foreign policy towards Africa. It was during these years that initial assessments of Africa’s potential were made and Turkish officials held low-level meetings with their African counterparts. When, as a sign of the success of this due diligence, Turkey designated the year 2005 as the Year of Africa, African governments were not taken by surprise. At the same time, the move represented an unmistakable sign of Turkey’s commitment to building stronger relations with Africa (Siradag, 2013).

The second period, which started in 2005 and ended with the First Turkey–Africa Summit three years later, marked a period of more diverse relations in a range of areas, including politics and the economy. During this period, Turkish–African relations made more progress than the Turkish authorities had initially predicted, while both sides became more familiar with their counterparts.

The third period began with the 2008 summit and continued until then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s August 2011 visit to the Somalia capital, Mogadishu. This was when Turkish–African relations assumed a multidimen-

sional nature (Ozkan, 2016, 2017b). While the Turkish government launched embassies in various African countries, the nation's trade volume with Africa quadrupled from USD 4 billion to approximately USD 25 billion. As such, the years between 2008 and 2011 represent a key period of growing complexity in Turkey's Africa policy.

It was during the fourth period, which began with Erdogan's official visit to Somalia, that Turkish–African relations assumed a political nature (Ozkan and Orakci, 2015). In 2011, the Turkish government's Somalia Initiative entailed the nation's focus on high politics—political matters and security issues—in addition to mere economic ties and humanitarian or development aid. As a matter of fact, Turkey's involvement in Somalia was the second experience of state building for Ankara, after the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The relative restoration of public order and the world's renewed interest in the Somalia conflict elevated Turkey as a prominent stakeholder whose opinions were widely considered. As a result, the Turkish authorities met representatives from the European Union, the United Kingdom, Spain, Norway and the United States, among others, on African issues (Davutoglu, 2012).

The end of 2014 marked the beginning of the fifth and last period in Turkish–African relations, which has focused on the normalisation and institutionalisation of these relations. Therefore, the current period has particular importance, as it is key to consolidating existing achievements and developing a more systematic approach. At this point, there are two pressing issues at hand. At the first Turkey–Africa summit in 2008, most African leaders had serious doubts about the sincerity of Turkey's interests and raised questions about the nation's agenda that time. As a result, the Malabo Summit focused on the possibility of more comprehensive cooperation and maximising mutual benefits in future (Kalin, 2014). The Malabo summit in 2014 overcome resistance for the full normalisation of the Turkey's relations with African countries.

A second imperative for the current phase is to deepen and broaden relationships. Thus far, government agencies, including the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Turks Abroad and Related Communities Presidency (YTB), and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), Turkish Maarif Foundation (Akgun and Ozkan, 2020) and Turkish Airlines (Anaz and Akman, 2017) independently have sought to explore the African continent and to develop their own perspectives. This has resulted in the further diversification of Turkey's interactions on the continent. Keeping in mind that Turkey has no colonial history in Africa, this approach represented a suitable course of action. One can argue that, through it, Turkey has developed a more effective and result-oriented style and managed to win over sceptics across the continent. Nevertheless, the time has come for the Turkish government to

consciously trade its current position as a supnation with a lasting presence through local-level partnerships.

Overall, Turkey's mode of engagement with Africa has been a slow and incremental process. New actors and institutions of the Turkish bureaucracy have been involved in shaping Africa policy gradually, while African partners' interests in developing these relations have also slowly increased (Donelli, 2018). One can now view the relationship between Turkey and Africa as fully developed with all relevant actors contributing to it. This process has thus led to the normalisation of these relations at a social, political and economic level. Turkey has transitioned from being a 'new' entrant into the African space to being an established partner (Langan, 2017).

5 Conclusion

Turkey opening up to Africa is a result of both Turkey's domestic transformation and changes in the global political economy. This opening has given a new impetus for Ankara. Turkey's domestic transformation has challenged traditional Turkish partners in the economy and diversified its trade alternatives in line with changes in the global political-economy power configuration. Changes in the international system led countries to define their own interests in a newly emerging system (Anaz and Ozcan, 2016). Turkey's response to such changes has been to define a multidimensional foreign policy and develop economic and political relations not only with immediate neighbors but also with other regions and continents. Turkey's Africa opening is part and parcel of this redefinition of Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey's Africa initiative has, so far, been one of its most successful foreign policy projects in terms of economic, political and social gains. Relations between African countries and Ankara have turned to be mutually beneficial, which has created a momentum and willingness to deepen these ties. Turkey–Africa summits have helped to facilitate these relations at a broader level and their declarations continue to be the main guiding documents in taking these relations forward. Today, Africa is considered as a natural ally in the eyes of the Turkish people, and the issues of Africa have become so normalised that nobody—even opposition parties—criticises these relations at all. Some African issues, like Somalia, are literally internalised and now are considered as part of Turkey's domestic agenda. However, in some fields Turkey's cooperation with Africa remains weaker than expected. For instance, combating the negative effects of climate change, human trafficking, cybercrimes as well as environmental issues and sports activities still score low in the rank-

ings of Turkey–Africa cooperation. Similarly, Turkey’s engagement with African Union institutions remains far from the level expected by the two declarations.

Turkey–Africa relations are likely to continue in the coming years, because they have been accepted socially. Politically speaking, more engagement with Africa has created a better understanding in Turkey of Africa and its potential and led to a successful example of South-South cooperation. In coming years, whether global and domestic developments will bring any change in the nature and speed of Turkey–Africa relations is yet to be seen. However, Africa has now been redefined conceptually and politically in Turkish foreign policy and Turkey–Africa relations appear to be stable. The Turkish government’s efforts tend to be appreciated across the continent. It is possible, nonetheless, to identify certain shortcomings. The most important point right now relates to the challenging task of making the country’s efforts matter on a regional and global scale.

Up until 2011, key African countries believed that Turkey’s sudden interest in Africa’s affairs was primarily economically motivated—which is why they concentrated on short-term benefits at the expense of the Turkish government’s long-term contributions. Ankara’s policy towards Somalia, however, helped to transform African leaders’ perceptions of Turkey at national and regional levels (Harper, 2014). Furthermore, official visits by Turkish leaders made positive contributions to Turkey’s image on the continent. The next years, though, will test Turkey’s position as a security actor alongside other critical players, such as France, the United Kingdom and the United States. In terms of emerging powers, however, one can argue that Turkey’s place is now firmly secured on the continent, especially with regard to trade and humanitarian aid.

Domestically, the biggest challenge is the lack of understanding and interest regarding Africa, both in policy circles and academia within Turkey. This continues to be present, despite more than a decade of engagement with the continent. There still remains an acute shortage of trained Turkish experts on African affairs. Although various Turkish institutions have launched Africa research centres in previous years, these organisations remain ill equipped and prone to reproducing extremely Orientalist perspectives that are on the verge of becoming obsolete in the West.

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