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***African Studies in Turkey***

**Elem EYRİCE TEPECİKLIĞLU\***

\* Dr., Department of International Relations, Yaşar University

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# African Studies in Turkey

**Elem EYRİCE TEPECİKLİOĞLU**

*Dr., Department of International Relations, Yaşar University, İzmir.*

*E-mail: elem.eyrice@yasar.edu.tr*

## ABSTRACT

This article aims at providing an analysis of African studies as a recently emerging field of study in Turkish academia. For many years, African issues had low priority in both policy and academic circles. The article argues that the recent scholarly interest in African issues is largely a product of the increasing political interest towards the continent. Although the existing literature mostly concentrates on Turkish-African relations and the study of particular African issues remain limited in number, African studies in Turkey has made progress and is still evolving with an expanding and diversifying literature.

**Keywords:** African Studies, Area Studies, International Relations, Turkey.

## Türkiye’de Afrika Çalışmaları

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Türk akademisinde yeni gelişmeye başlayan bir alan olan Afrika çalışmalarının durumuna ilişkin bir değerlendirmede bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Afrika, uzun yıllar boyunca gerek siyasi gerekse akademik alanda en çok ihmal edilen bölgelerin başında gelmiştir. Son zamanlarda Afrika çalışmalarına yönelik artan akademik ilginin siyasi ilgiyle yakından alakalı olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Afrika çalışmalarına ilişkin mevcut literatür daha ziyade Türkiye-Afrika ilişkilerine odaklanmakta ve belirli Afrika konularına ilişkin çalışmalar sınırlı sayıda kalmaktadır. Ancak Afrika çalışmalarının ilerleme kaydettiğini ve literatürün giderek genişlemekte ve çeşitlenmekte olduğunu görmekteyiz.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Afrika Çalışmaları, Alan Çalışmaları, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Türkiye.

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it argues that there is a strong correlation between political interest and academic studies. Second, it seeks to present this argument by chronologically analysing African studies produced by Turkish academics. The first argument is especially valid for certain disciplines or sub-fields such as International Relations (IR) and area studies. Important events and developments in international politics and foreign policy have a fundamental impact on how those disciplines are studied and taught by academics. For example, Roter informs us that the development of Slovenian IR was related to Yugoslavian foreign policy, to which Slovenia was then a part of. However, after independence, the focus of Slovenian IR shifted from such issues to new areas of political interest, that is, the integration to the Western world through “Western” political and military organizations including the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, master programs on EU and Russian studies are increasing in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania where IR did not exist institutionally until the 1990s, before the collapse of the Soviet regime. Following this period, the focus of the studies shifted from the “perceived external threats” and “the survival of small states” to the issues like EU and NATO membership and regional security matters.<sup>2</sup> Czech IR is also one of those still-evolving IR disciplines and due to national considerations; focus mostly on the EU integration process.<sup>3</sup> As for Russian IR, (national) identity concerns and issues on the standing of the country against the perceived threat of the Western world determined the development of the discipline as well as disciplinary production.<sup>4</sup> A survey conducted with IR scholars from US colleges and universities also found that the respondents covered in their introduction to international relations courses the areas that are strategically more important in US foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

The same applies to area/regional studies. However, the fact that particular regions/areas have been more studied than others at various times also relates to the historical development of specific regions and the changing dynamics of international politics. Regional studies first flourished after the end of the Second World War. This was a period when European regional integration was consolidated while economic integration gradually spilled over into the political sphere as the number of EU members increased. Unsurprisingly, these developments were followed by growth in European/EU studies. As Wight puts it, “University curricula reflect their historical circumstances. The end of European hegemony made the concept of ‘European Studies’ possible.”<sup>6</sup> Here, the demise in European hegemony refers to the political loss of colonies, although European countries focused on European integration and EU enlargement process from the 1950s onwards. This change in the region’s position and EU’s emergence as an important regional organization led to an increase in European/European Union studies.

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- 1 Petra Roter, “At the Centre and Periphery Simultaneously: The Incomplete Internationalization of Slovenian International Relations”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol.12, No.2, 2009, p.180-182.
  - 2 Eiki Berg and Matthieu Chillaud, “An IR Community in the Baltic States: Is there a Genuine One?”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol.12, No.2, 2009, p.194-195.
  - 3 Vendulka Kubálková, “The ‘Take off’ of the Czech IR Discipline”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol.12, No.2, 2009, p.205-212.
  - 4 Viatcheslav Morozov, “Obsessed with Identity: the IR in post-Soviet Russia”, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol.12, No.2, 2009, p.200-205.
  - 5 Susan Peterson, Michael J. Tierney and Daniel Maliniak, “Teaching and Research Practices, Views on the Discipline, and Policy Attitudes of International Relations Faculty at U.S. Colleges and Universities”, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, 2005.
  - 6 Quoted in Francis McGowan, “The Contrasting Fortunes of European Studies and EU Studies: Grounds for Reconciliation?”, *Sussex European Institute*, 2008, <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=seiw-working-paper-no-99.pdf&site=266> (Accessed on 25 January 2014), p. 9.

Area studies developed in Turkey in a similar vein; however, they have a much shorter history in the Turkish context, with IR departments starting to offer graduate programs on particular regions especially in late 1990s and early 2000s. Of the programs offered on specific regions, European studies or the EU is the most common, followed by programs on the Middle East. The Department of European Union and International Economic Relations in Ankara University was established just after the Turkish government applied for full EU membership in 1987.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the first African Studies master program, Middle East and African Studies -attached to Gazi University IR Department- was set up in 1982 following the attempt to improve relations with African countries.<sup>8</sup> In addition to foreign policy orientations, Turkish IR departments are interested in both great and emerging powers of the era, as well as neighbouring countries. This is illustrated by a survey study conducted to evaluate how Turkish IR experts analyse their discipline. Aydın and Yazgan found that case studies in IR courses usually focused on Turkey, Turkey's neighbouring regions and/or great powers, particularly the US, Europe, the EU, the Middle East, the Soviet Union/Russian Federation, Caucasia, the Balkans and Eurasia.<sup>9</sup>

As for the African studies, it is a relatively new field of research in Turkey with political (dis) interest having significant impacts on academic research. Among the various social science disciplines, IR experts have produced most of the current literature on Africa. This is partly because area studies are generally considered as a sub-field of IR in Turkey while area studies programs are established in collaboration with social sciences institutes and taught mostly by IR specialists. As of 2015, there are 27 graduate programs on European Studies/EU with only three graduate programs on Africa –and one of these is combined with the neighboring Middle East region. The first studies on African issues have been published in late 1950s and especially in the 1960s when Turkey first sought to increase relations with African countries. However, the real progress has been made following the Action Plan for Opening up to Africa in 1998. In an environment where Africa's role in international politics is increasing and all traditional and emerging powers are in competition over access to abundant natural resources of African countries, Turkey is also seeking to enhance its engagement in the continent.

This condition is in no way peculiar to the Turkish case. For example, Philips noted in 1997 that African studies only flourished in Japan after the Second World War with increasing Japanese investment and foreign aid in the continent.<sup>10</sup> In the USA, the fact that security concerns has made African studies increasingly militarized is in line with US military planning in the continent. It is also the case that, following 9/11, some government institutions have provided large amounts of funding for Africanist scholars to provide information on Africa critical to national security.<sup>11</sup> Chinese engagement with the continent has also increased with its emergence as a significant economic player, especially in the last two decades.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Chinese research on Africa is now rising. Similarly, African studies in Russia has been primarily to serve Russia's economic interests with the Russian

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7 <http://sosbilens.ankara.edu.tr/?p=605>.

8 Volkan İpek and Gonca Biltekin, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A post-Internationalist Approach", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol.49, 2013, p.127.

9 Mustafa Aydın and Korhan Yazgan, "Türkiye'de Uluslararası İlişkiler Akademisyenleri Araştırma, Eğitim ve Disiplin Değerlendirmeleri Anketi – 2009", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol.7, No.25, 2010, p.3-42.

10 John Edward Philips, "African Studies in Japan", *African Studies Review*, Vol.40, No.3, 1997, p.161-180.

11 David Wiley, "Militarizing Africa and African Studies and the U.S. Africanist Response", *African Studies Review*, Vol.55, No.2, 2012, p.147-161.

12 Princeton N. Lyman, "China's Rising Role in Africa", Presentation to the U.S-China Commission, 2005, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/8436/chinas\\_rising\\_role\\_in\\_africa.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/8436/chinas_rising_role_in_africa.html) (Accessed on 28 July 2015).

government allocating substantial amounts of resources in order to gather more information on Africa and to better shape its foreign policy towards African countries.<sup>13</sup>

It is within this context that the author seeks to survey the current state of African studies in Turkey, an emerging power in Africa. From a Turkish perspective, the author also aims at analyzing how Turkish academia responded to the current political interest in Africa. However, it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a full account of all studies published on African issues. Instead, the study will provide a general overview of those studies. Here, it should be noted that the author does not take Africa as a geographical entity. Both the Northern part of the continent and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has distinctive historical, cultural, religious, political and ecological characteristics. Being under the Ottoman rule for centuries, Northern African countries shared a common history, religion and traditions with the Ottoman Empire and its successor, the Turkish Republic. However, those countries are generally accepted as being part of the Middle East region and are mostly studied by Middle Eastern experts. Accordingly, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have been long studied by Turkish academics though not necessarily under the label of African studies. It is for these reasons that the focus of this article will be mostly the analysis of the academic studies produced on SSA.

Until very recently, Turkey could not improve relations with those countries for the reasons outlined in the following parts of the study. However, recent political and economic interest has driven academic interest, culminating in an increase in scholarly work on Africa. Although this increase on African studies is promising, most of those studies, especially those on Turkish-African relations, provide a chronological overview of Turkey's African policy generally without many critics. This is especially visible in the works provided by think tanks who receive external –sometimes government- funding. Business councils and chambers of commerce also publish several reports and country profiles of African countries. These publications carry great importance as they provide a wide range of information about those countries. As those organizations seek for new markets and investment opportunities, their publications mostly focus on these issues and they generally take the recent African opening as a purely positive development. However, it is also true that more critical studies have to be produced for the development of African studies in Turkey. The following section provides an overview of Turkish-African relations and the major reasons why relations with African countries were neglected in the broader field of Turkish foreign policy.

## Political (Dis)interest towards Africa

Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkish foreign policy-makers placed a heavy and immediate emphasis on developing relations with the Western world. During that period, nearly all African countries were under colonial rule and Turkey had other internal and foreign policy priorities. Believing that the country is part of the West with its secular state system and liberal/capitalist economic orientation, the new Turkish elite denied its cultural and/or religious proximity to the Eastern/Middle Eastern world and rejected Turkey's Ottoman heritage. Within Cold War dynamics, relations with the non-Western world did not occupy a significant place in foreign policy. In its limited interaction with Africa, Turkey also sided with its NATO allies during the Suez Crisis, joined the Baghdad Pact, which was seen by most of the Arab and Northern African states as a vehicle

13 J. Peter Pham, "Russia's Return to Africa: Two Decades after Pullback, Russia Chases Gas Resources, Minerals and UN Votes", *Atlantic Council*, 2014, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/articles/russia-s-return-to-africa> (Accessed on 29 July 2015).

to increase US expansionism in the Middle East and abstained or voted against the independence of many African countries in the United Nations.<sup>14</sup> During the early phases of decolonization period when African countries started to gain their political independence, Turkey neither had the political will nor had adequate financial resources to improve relations with African countries.

This attitude worsened relations with those countries and the neglect of Africa within policy circles had implications for scholarly work. Specifically, Turkish academics were not interested in studying a region of disinterest for Turkish foreign policy. Until the approval of the Action Plan in 1998 and the adoption of the Strategy for Enhancing Economic and Commercial Relations with Africa<sup>15</sup> in 2003, there was barely any literature on African issues. The fact that African affairs were not deemed important to teach or study partly explains the lack of any credible information on Africa until the recent years. However, approval of the opening policy reflected a significant rhetoric and policy shift with its own pragmatic drivers. Turkish government's recent activism in Africa is part of a larger project to increase its role in regional and/or global politics by following a more active and multi-dimensional foreign policy especially towards once-neglected regions. Nevertheless, this activism in foreign policy started before the ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) assumed power in 2002.

Until the end of the Second World War, Turkey did not support most of the independence movements of African countries and therefore, only had limited diplomatic contacts with those countries.<sup>16</sup> International circumstances during the Cold War period including the alliance with the ex-colonial powers also led Turkish officials to follow a pro-Western attitude. However, in 1960s and 1970s, Turkey started diplomatic relations with many of those African countries.<sup>17</sup> The first initiatives have been taken after the 1960 coup d'état. The military elites having sympathy towards the independence movements of African countries were not happy with the policies pursued towards those countries during the previous Democrat Party rule.<sup>18</sup> Having seen how Turkey's foreign policy towards the non-Western world isolated the country, the rulers of the following Justice Party also sought to improve relations with those countries through a multidimensional foreign policy approach.<sup>19</sup> In its attempt to increase political, economic and cultural relations with African countries, Turkey provided foreign aid to a few African countries, signed mutual trade and cooperation agreements and implemented official visits to some of those countries during 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s, the deterioration of relations with the USA also resulted in the diversification of foreign relations with the establishment

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14 Türkkiye Ataöv, "Afrika ve Biz", *Vatan*, 21 March 1976.

15 The former covered various political, diplomatic, economic, educational and social measures in order to improve relations with African countries. Economic measures were the central part of this opening plan which was followed by the Strategy for Enhancing Economic and Commercial Relations with Africa prepared by the Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade. The Strategy also stated a number of objectives to develop bilateral and multilateral economic and trade relations with African countries. It was not possible for the author to have access to both of the original documents but former ambassador Numan Hazar provides detailed information about the measures listed in the opening plan (Numan Hazar, "Türkiye Afrika'da: Eylem Planının Uygulanması ve Değerlendirme On Beş Yıl Sonra", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.4, No.46, 2012, p.5-13) while Attila G. Kızıllarslan, from General Directorate of African countries and Regional Organizations, provides information about the Strategy. See Attila G. Kızıllarslan, "Turkey Africa Relations", *IV<sup>th</sup> Workshop Final Report, Economic Relations between African Countries and Turkey*, İstanbul, Tasam Strategic Report No.24, p.25-31.

16 Ataöv, "Afrika ve Biz."

17 İpek and Biltekin, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Implementation", p.125-127.

18 Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Birinci Cilt, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p.785- 786.

19 Ibid, p.788-789.

20 Baskın Oran, "1960-1980: Göreli Özerklik-3", Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası*, p.677 and İpek and Biltekin, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Implementation", p.126-127.

of a new administrative system in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of the regional desks created during this period was assigned to Africa.<sup>21</sup> This multi-dimensional foreign policy understanding has been revived in late 1980s and early 1990s under the leadership of Turgut Özal. In 1987, the State Planning Organization also provided assistance worth 10 million USD to 12 African countries through the Sahel Project.<sup>22</sup> During this period, Turkey's engagement with Africa was also driven by economic considerations, predominantly by a quest of new exporting opportunities for the newly-emerging conservative bourgeoisie.

As noted by Sayarı, "compared to the Cold War years, Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was significantly more activist and assertive." However, in the post-Cold War era, Turkey further modified some of its "Republican foreign policy principles."<sup>23</sup> AKP embraced this multi-faceted foreign policy approach and the gradual economic recovery enabled it to follow a more confident foreign policy. The new foreign policy vision required increased activism and establishing stronger relationships in different areas. By attaching great importance to Africa, AKP government did not only increase its bilateral relations with a majority of African countries but also showed a serious interest in the African continent as a whole. This resulted in greater involvement in African issues, including actively participating in peacekeeping missions, providing significant amounts of humanitarian assistance, enhancing relations with regional organizations and increasing diplomatic presence.<sup>24</sup> This political and economic interest in turn drove academic interest that culminated in an increase in scholarly work on Africa. Universities started to offer MA programs in African studies and research centers were established within both universities and think-tanks in order to increase awareness on African issues. Rising Turkish involvement in Africa has not only increased the number of academic studies produced on African issues, but also widened knowledge about the continent.

## Pre-Opening Era: The Ottoman Legacy and Beyond (1923-1998)

The last decade has seen a greater exploration of African issues within Turkish academia, with the field of African studies in Turkey now gaining more academic priority especially when compared to the pre-opening era. For example, among the available dissertations in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education, we can see that 108 Africa-related dissertations were written in graduate programs between 1986-2014<sup>25</sup> and more than half were written in the last four years. Africa is studied most in international relations departments, with 38 dissertations in international relations,

21 İpek and Bıltekin, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Implementation", p.126-127.

22 Nuri Birttek, "Türkiye'nin Dış Yardımları ve Yönetimi", Yayınlanmamış Uzmanlık Tezi, Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü, 1996, p.37.

23 Sabri Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, No.1, 2000, p.169-170. As noted by Hale and Özbudun, "the traditional republican foreign-policy-making establishment had prioritized national security and military readiness"... through a "highly defensive security culture" (William Hale and Ergun Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The case of the AKP*, London and New York, Routledge, 2010, p.120-121). The AKP government tried to abandon this "hard power" approach with a new emphasis from security concerns to economic prosperity, cooperation with its neighboring countries and more activism in the previously-neglected regions. Ibid, p.121 and Joerg Baudner, "The Evolution of Turkey's Foreign Policy under the AK Party Government", *Insight Turkey*, Vol.16, No.3, 2014, p.79-100.

24 See "Turkey-Africa Relations", Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' web page, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa> (Accessed on 30 July 2015).

25 The author searched the National Thesis Center database by using the keyword "Africa". For a detailed analysis of theses written on African issues, see Zekeriyâ Kurşun (ed.), *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Afrika Bibliyografyası*, İstanbul, Ortadoğu ve Afrika Araştırmacıları Derneği Yayınları, 2013.

14 in economics, and 8 in political science. Other dissertations focused on history, agriculture, sociology or music. Considering that African issues received scant attention in Turkish academia for many years, even these numbers seem quite promising. This section will provide a brief analysis of African studies in Turkey especially by following fields of international relations, politics and history which have contributed most to the development of African studies in Turkey.

As noted before, the Ottoman Empire historically had close relations and cultural ties with Northern African countries, dating back to the early sixteenth century. However, although the first contact between the Empire and Africa started during that period, the first publications on Africa during Ottoman era date back to the second half of the nineteenth century. Those initial studies included travel books (*seyahatname*) of important Ottoman officials: Ömer Lütfi's *Ümitburnu Seyahatnamesi* (1876); Ömer Kamil Paşa's *Sudan-ı Misri* (1886-1887); Mehmed Muhsin's *Afrika Delili* (1894); Mehmet Ekrem's *Afrika Seyahatnamesi* (1895-1896); Sadık el-Müeyyed Paşa's *Habeş Seyahatnamesi* (1904); Mehmet Mihri's *Sudan Seyahatnamesi* (1910); Mahmud Naci and Mehmet Nuri's *Trablusgarp* (1914) and Halil Halit's *Cezayir Hatıratından* (1906).<sup>26</sup> However, this interest in African issues lost its appeal in the early years of the Turkish Republic when the Republican elites sought to distance the new state from its Ottoman past. Other important factors such as the independence struggles of African countries, the pervasive effects of colonization period, political disinterest and lack of financial resources also impeded the development of African studies during this period. Accordingly, when African countries started to gain their political independence in late 1950s and early 1960s, there was barely any publication on African studies in Turkish, whether on African history, culture, economics or the struggle against colonialism. However, political efforts to increase relations with African countries in 1960s were followed with the publication of a few studies on African issues.

Within this framework, African research in Turkey can be chronologically divided into two major parts: The first category sought to inform academics who had little knowledge of Africa by providing general information on the continent. These earlier publications, predating the post-opening studies, were the product of an emerging enthusiasm about the independence of African countries. The lack of knowledge on African issues during that period increased their importance. One of the first of these few publications is *Kara Afrika* (1971) by Hıfzı Topuz, writer and journalist. Although not widely-known, this book made a very important contribution to African studies in Turkish academia as it has a greater purpose to provide detailed information about African belief systems, traditions and languages in addition to Ottoman-African relations. Topuz's other books, *Kongo Kurtuluş Savaşı* (1965); *Kara Afrika'da İletişim* (1987) and *Lumumba* (1987) were also important for the development of Turkey's African studies literature. In an even earlier book, *Yarın Kıtası Afrika* (1959), Abdi İpekçi published interviews he had conducted in a mainstream Turkish newspaper, *Milliyet*. Following his tour to several African countries, İpekçi seemingly had the aim to introduce interesting facts about Africa to the public, though not being able to escape the use of orientalist narratives. Although the book is not a study of academic interest, İpekçi's travel notes provide a wide range of information about different colonial administrative systems in the continent. Türkkaya Ataöv's *Afrika Ulusal Kurtuluş Mücadeleleri* (1977) constitutes the most comprehensive and detailed account on African countries. Divided into four general parts over nearly 700 pages, this initial study concentrated on information collection on African countries. Its publication in the late 1970s coincided with Turkish attempts to pursue a different African policy, especially by providing financial assistance to African countries.

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26 This data is compiled from Kuşun, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Afrika Bibliyografyası*.

The primary concern of contemporary studies was to understand African cultures, politics, societies and history. Apart from Ümit Kıvanç's *Afrika Boynuzu'nda Ne Oldu?* (1979) which explored the development of the Ethiopian-Somalian conflict and Cold War rivalry in the region, we see little original research on specific topics or individual countries at that time. Mehmet Harmanlı's *Afrika Efsaneleri* (1968); Aydoğan Köksal's *Afrika Coğrafyası* (1976) and Selami Gözenç's *Afrika Ülkeler Coğrafyası 1* (1995) are among the few books published in the fields of literature and geography. Those initial studies also include the two 1977-dated reminiscences of Dikerdem who worked in several African countries, including Egypt and Ghana: *Ortadoğu'da Devrim Yılları* and *Üçüncü Dünya'dan*. Ergün Tuncalı's *Kara İhtilal: Uyanan Afrika* (1966) and Baskın Oran's *Az Gelişmiş Ülke Milliyetçiliği: Kara Afrika Modeli* (1977) are also important studies produced at that time. During this period, various foreign African studies ranging across religion, philosophy, history and politics were also translated into Turkish, including the works of the most important anti-colonial thinkers and politicians such as Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961, translated in 1965) and *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne* (1959, translated in 1983); Kwame Nkrumah's *Neo-Colonialism – The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965, translated in 1966) and *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970, translated in 1976); Amilcar Cabral's *Revolution in Guinea* (1970, translated in 1974) and Nelson Mandela's *The Struggle is My Life* (1986, translated in 1986). Other important translations include Rupert Emerson's *From empire to nation: The rise to self-assertion of Asian and African peoples* (1960, translated in 1965); Basil Davidson's *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola's people* (1975, translated in 1975); Doris Lessing's *African Stories* (1964, translated in 1985); Vincent Monteil's *L'Islam Noir* (1971, translated in 1992); Ali Mazrui's *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (1987, translated in 1991) and Heinz Kimmerle's *Afrikanische Philosophie* (1991, translated in 1995).

The first half of the 1980s was not productive years for Turkish universities following the 1980 coup d'état. Few area studies were pursued from this time until the 1990s, with the historic end of the Cold War. After the former Soviet Republics gained independence in early 1990s, they became the new concern in Turkish policy circles, which led to an increase in scholarly work on these newly interesting regions. However, Turkey's attempts to take the lead in integrating these newly-established states into international society and to create a Turkic world under its own leadership were not welcomed by their leaders. This failed attempt to become the leader of the "Turkic world", the loss of its strategic importance to the Western bloc after the Cold War, and the EU's rejection of Turkey's application for full EU membership at the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, led the Turkish government to find alternatives in its foreign policy by playing a more active and constructive role in world politics rather than solely aligning itself with the Western world.

The adoption of the Opening to Africa Policy in 1998 corresponds to this period when İsmail Cem was Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, political instability, economic crisis and lack of financial resources impeded the implementation of this policy until the AKP government.<sup>27</sup> Relations with Africa subsequently became a central foreign policy priority, with the second half of the 2000s seeing a rapid increase in political and economic relations between Turkey and African countries. Together with the increasing influence and interest of the great powers in the continent and the market potential of African countries for Turkish products, this new era stimulated a renewed interest on African issues. 2005 was celebrated as "the year of Africa" by the Turkish government. In the same year, Erdoğan became the first Turkish prime minister to visit south of equator. The Turkish

27 Mehmet Özkan, "What drives Turkey's Involvement in Africa?", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol.37, No.126, 2010, p.534.

government was accepted as an observer country of the African Union (AU) in 2005 and became a strategic partner of the AU in 2008. All these initiatives were in line with the Opening Plan of 1998 and developing Africa's place in Turkey's new foreign policy as a strategic region. These developments had direct implications for African studies which will be analyzed in the following section.

## **Post-Opening Era (Since 1998)**

Following the Opening Plan, the inattention to Africa prevalent in Turkish academia began to be replaced, sometimes for purely academic reasons of contributing to a less developed area of study, but sometimes for pragmatic reasons of collecting data on Africa for government agencies. Given that the majority of Turkish think tanks advocate policy decisions and some receive government funding, especially through the submission of projects to government bodies; the reports, articles, analyses and policy papers of these institutions fall mostly into the latter category. They also provide important insights on particular issues and/or regions and offer policy recommendations to government officials.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the first wave of studies mostly concentrated on Turkish-African relations, with retired diplomat Numan Hazar's book, *Küreselleşme Sürecinde Afrika ve Türkiye-Afrika İlişkileri* (2003) being one of the earliest studies concentrating on bilateral relations. As economic measures were the central part of the opening plan, those studies do not only focus on political relations but also on economic relations or the political economy of Turkey's engagement with Africa. Despite this, most are written by IR specialists rather than economists, and take a historical approach to Turkish-African relations, especially after the opening period.

From the emergence of the first publications on Africa until today, no textbook on Africa – except that of Ataöv – was published. Despite being the only African expert during this period, Ataöv did not publish on Africa again until 2010 with *Emperyalizmin Afrika Sömürüsü*. Earlier publications in the post-opening period failed to give adequate importance to specific issues. From the adoption of Opening to Africa Policy in 1998 to the Year of Africa in 2005, we saw only a little development in this part of the African studies literature. Later, however, especially after 2005, more systematic studies on individual cases or the internal problems of African countries begun to be produced, in addition to works concentrating on Turkish interest in Africa. These studies include academic writings, reports, policy papers and other think tank publications. The great majority support recent Turkish foreign policy initiatives in Africa, with little critique of the Turkish opening.

In contrast with the founding rulers of the Turkish Republic, the new political elite of AKP now places a strong emphasis on Turkey's Ottoman heritage in a new orientation, called "neo-Ottomanism"<sup>29</sup> in the literature. Within this context, Ahmet Kavas's *Osmanlı-Afrika İlişkileri* (2006) provides important insights into the history of Ottoman engagement with Africa. Many other important books on Ottoman/Turkish Africa have also been published in this period. Among the

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28 In the Turkish context, think tanks are mostly identified with strategic research centers. Their numbers have dramatically increased since the Cold War, especially in the last decade. The number of *advocacy tanks* seeking to provide legitimate intellectual grounds for existing political decisions and to manipulate public opinion is also rising. Serhat Güvenç, "Türkiye'de Düşünce Kuruluşları ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Disiplini", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol.4, No.13, 2007, p.138-139.

29 Neo-Ottomanism simply refers to a new foreign policy ambition for a greater involvement especially in the former Ottoman territories such as the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa. However, this changing character of foreign policy has later been associated with the ruling AKP and has been frequently used to explain Turkey's recent foreign policy. Taşpınar defines the "Neo-Ottoman" tendencies of the AKP as "a willingness to come to terms with Turkey's Ottoman and Islamic heritage at home and abroad." See Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision and Syria", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.35 No.3, 2012, p.128.

most significant of those are Kavas's other book, *Geçmişten Günümüze Afrika* (2005), which deals with the history of Africa, with a special focus on the spread of Islam in the continent, and Kurşun's edited collection *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Afrika Bibliyografyası* (2013). Ahmet Uçar's book, *Güney Afrika'da Osmanlılar* (2000) concentrates on the daily lives of the Muslim community of the Cape Malays as well as the life of Abu Bakr Effendi, an Osmanlı kadı, sent to Cape Town in order to teach this community. İsmail Ermağan's edited compilations; *Dünya Siyasetinde Afrika 1* (2014) and *Dünya Siyasetinde Afrika 2* (2015) are one of the most important initiatives in analyzing the role of Africa in world politics. These scholarly works also cover various African issues while dealing with African policies of emerging powers. These books will soon be followed by the third volume. Other important books on different African issues include Can Altan's *Afrika Ülkeleri ve Kuruluşları* (2003); Hayrettin Rayman's *Afrika Masalları* (2004) and Ramazan Özey's *Afrika Coğrafyası* (2009).

However, most of the studies in the post-opening era consist of articles published either in academic journals or as reports of think tanks. Especially in the last a few years, various articles on Turkish initiatives have been published, most of which provides detailed information on Turkey's recent engagement with Africa. Nevertheless, most of them provide only a historical record of Turkish involvement in the continent and are not supported with a theoretical framework. However, since the mid-2000s, Turkish scholars have also turned their attention to specific issues, producing works on African cinema, poetry, media, geography, education, migration, politics, religion, history, security, tourism, economics, nature and animals.<sup>30</sup> Yet, publications on specific African issues remain limited in number. The following part of the study will concentrate on the literature produced by think tanks along with African studies centers established within those think tanks and universities.

### **African Studies Centers within Think Tanks**

In addition to the previously-discussed literature on Africa, think tanks are also involved in African studies. Indeed, it would not be wrong to argue that they are the most active in publishing works on African issues. Among them, TASAM (the Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies) is the most prominent think tank focusing on African affairs. TASAM's African Institute (formerly the African Studies Group) has published various books, reports and commentaries since its establishment in 2004, and organizes workshops, meetings and roundtables on specific African issues. TASAM also has organized an annual international Turkish-African Congress since 2005 (except in 2011) with

30 For example, see Oya Şakı Aydın, "Afrika'da Sinema Serüveni ve Cinéma Beur Akımı", *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, Vol.2, 2005, p.89-103; M. Fatih Andı, "Afrika Bağımsızlık Savaşlarının II. Yeni Şiirine Yansımaları", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi*, Vol.33, No.33, 2005, p.1-18; Hasan Memiş, Mehmet Kara and Lütfü Tayfur, "Yoksulluk, Yapısal Uyum Programları ve Sahra Altı Afrika Ülkeleri", *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol.7, No.14, 2010, p.325-246; Soner Karagül and İbrahim Arslan, "Afrika'da Barış ve Güvenliğin İnşasında Kıtasal Yaklaşım", *Güvenlik Stratejileri*, Vol.19, 2010, p.57-98; Yusuf Ziya Oğrak and Ahmet Altınel, "Afrika Karası Devekuşlarında (*Struthio camellus*) Yumurta Ağırlığının Kuluçka Performansına Etkileri", *İstanbul Üniv. Vet. Fak. Derg.* Vol.36, No.2, 2010, p.7-15; M. Suphi Özçomak and Ayhan Demirci, "Afrika Birliği Ülkelerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Göstergeleri Arasındaki İlişkinin Kanonik Korelasyon Analizi ile İncelenmesi", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol.14, No.1, 2010, p.361-274; Y. Kerem Arslan, "Afrika İç-Göçü ve Post-Kolonyal Vatandaşlık", *Alternatif Politika*, Vol.4, No.2, 2012, p.202-231; Tarık Demir, "Afrika Sömürge Mücadelelerinin Sıradışı Coğrafi Fragmanların Oluşumunda Etkisi", *Coğrafya Dergisi*, Vol.26, 2013, p.76-93; Mahir Şaul, "Sahra altı Afrika Ülkelerinden Türkiye'ye İş Göçü", *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, Vol.68, No.1, 2013, p.83-121; Esmâ Durugönül, "Antalya'da Afrika kökenli Türkler üzerine çalışmanın sorunları", *International Journal of Human Sciences*, Vol.10, No.1, 2013, p.1401-1411; Beris Artan Özorun, "Güney Afrika'da Halkla İlişkiler: Farklı bir Yol Arayışına Vaka Analizi Yoluyla Bakmak", *İletişim Kuram ve Araştırma Dergisi*, No.38, 2014, p.74-95; Engin Akçay and Bünyamin Dinçer, "Güvenlik Politikaları Ekseninde Afrika Birliği: Teori ve Pratik", *Bilge Strateji*, Vol.7, No.12, 2015, p.61-78. On the other hand, the two issues of *Ankara Üniversitesi Afrika Çalışmaları Dergisi* covered articles on different African issues as well as African policies of different powers.

the support of government bodies and keynote addresses by senior officials including the Turkish President, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Experts at the center, or sometimes guest writers, produce the majority of the most extensive studies on Africa including many important books on Turkish-African relations, regional rivalry in Africa, and Africa in world politics.<sup>31</sup> TASAM's yearly collections on African issues and its annual conferences have contributed a great deal to the development of African studies in Turkey, although the involvement of government officials has arguably hindered their academic objectivity.

Apart from the African Institute at TASAM, other think-tanks also have research centers or working groups focusing on Africa although most focus their research on Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans, Caucasia and the USA within the broad field of Turkish foreign policy. Some think tanks have separate research centers or working groups on Africa while some combine Middle East and Africa together. Among the most influential is ODAM (the Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies) within USAK (the International Strategic Research Organization). ODAM publishes regular reports, policy briefs, books and articles on current African issues, although the majority of its publications are on the Middle East or Northern African countries. TURKSAM (the International Relations and Strategic Analysis Center) also studies both regions as a whole within its Middle East and Africa Center under the Foreign Policy Research Center. BILGESAM (the Wise Men's Center for Strategic Studies) which issues regular articles and analyses on current African issues also lists Africa among the Center's research areas. The Foreign Policy Program of TESEV (The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation) has a few publications on North African countries, though not necessarily on SSA. The Ankara Strategy Institute has an African group under an International Politics Department attached to its Political Research Center. IMPR (the International Middle East Peace Research Center) has an Africa section producing interviews and short articles on Sub-Saharan Africa and North African countries.

The Africa section of USGAM (the Center for International Strategy and Security Studies) publishes regular reports and articles on Turkish-African relations, emerging powers in the continent, and current issues and problems facing African countries. Although ORSAM (the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies) does not have a separate section on Africa, North Africa is included in its study areas. It publishes important reports and articles on African politics as well as on Turkish-African relations.<sup>32</sup> Other think tanks including ADAM (the Ankara Center for Thought and Research) and SETA (the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research), publish articles, analyses, policy briefs, reports and special issues on both Turkish-African relations and current issues in Africa. There is also ORDAF (the Association of Researchers on the Middle East and Africa), which conducts various academic work and produces regular reports and columns on both the Middle East and Africa. The Association also organizes many seminars, symposiums and conferences on specific issues regarding both regions.

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31 See the following TASAM publications: Bülent Aras, Hasan Selçuk and Kenan Dağcı, *Yeni Yüzyılda Afrika: Güvenlik, Siyaset, Ekonomi* (2005); Ahmet Kavas, *Osmanlı-Afrika İlişkileri* (2006); Ufuk Tepebaş, *Türk ve Afrikalı Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları: İşbirliği ve Kalkınma* (2009); Ufuk Tepebaş, *Afrika'da Bölgesel Örgütler I* (2009); Ufuk Tepebaş, *Türkiye-Afrika İlişkilerinin Gelişiminde Sivil Toplum ve Düşünce Kuruluşlarının Rolü* (2010); Ufuk Tepebaş, *Büyük Güçler ve Afrika: 21.Yüzyılda Çok Boyutlu Afrika Rekabeti* (2010); Muharrem H. Özev, *Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (2013); Ufuk Tepebaş, *Dönüşüm Sürecindeki Sahra Altı Afrika: Kalkınma, Güvenlik ve Ortaklık* (2013) and Hıfzı Topuz, *Afrika'ya Genel Bir Bakış* (2006).

32 See especially the following reports and special issues of ORSAM, "Turkey in Africa: The Implementation of the Action Plan and an Evaluation after Fifteen Years", *Orsam Report*, No.124, 2012 and "Türk Dış Politikası ve Afrika", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.4, No.46, 2012.

In addition to those think tanks, several government agencies including TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency),<sup>33</sup> DEİK (Foreign Economic Relations Board)<sup>34</sup>, business associations<sup>35</sup> and several chambers of commerce from different cities publish reports, analyses and country profiles on Africa. The publications of those organizations, except the former, serve to explore business and investment opportunities in Africa. African Solidarity and Cooperation Association (ASCA), established by Afro-Turks in 2006, is also involved in different national and international projects and organizes several activities. The Association has helped Dana Bayramı (Calf Festival) to be revived among the Afro-Turk population. This traditional festival is celebrated each year in late May in İzmir with the increasing participation of academics, journalists and representatives from African countries. While the mid-2000s saw an increase in those works on Africa and growth in the number of research centers within think tanks, African studies programs and research centers also flourished within universities during this period.

### ***African Studies Centers and Graduate Programs within Universities***

There are now seven African studies research centers attached to universities. The first of these centers, MEARC (the Middle East and Africa Research Center), was established in 2006 within Kadir Has University. MEARC remains one of the most active centers on African studies with the organization of conferences, panels and workshops on particular African issues. However, the first center devoted solely to African studies was established in 2008 at Ankara University, namely, AÇAUM (the Ankara University African Studies Center). It was founded with the aim of becoming the leading center for African studies in Turkey and to train researchers who would like to specialize on the African continent. Studies conducted by the center covered the following issues: starting an interdisciplinary African studies master program; publishing *Afrika*, Turkey's first academic journal devoted to African issues and organizing other activities, including seminars on African issues and Africa days focusing on African literature and cinema, publishing a monthly news bulletin, *African Agenda*, and issuing country profiles. Unfortunately, AÇAUM only published two issues due to disagreements over the planned theme of the third issue on the African diaspora in Turkey.

Following AÇAUM, another African studies center, EKOAF (the African Strategic Studies Research and Application Center), was established in 2009, within İzmir University of Economics, with the aim to develop research and application projects on African problems, especially regional and economic development, and poverty. Other centers established within Turkish universities include

33 TİKA published a special issue on Africa in 2011: "Afrika Özel Sayısı", *Avrasya Etüdüleri*, No.40, 2011/12. TİKA's other publications on Africa include; *Turkey-Africa Hand in Hand*, 2015, [http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2015/Prestij/Afrika\\_Ing.pdf](http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2015/Prestij/Afrika_Ing.pdf) (Accessed on 10 February 2016) with activity reports on different African countries such as Ethiopia, <http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2015/Prestij/Etiyopya.pdf>; Somalia, <http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2015/Prestij%20Eserler/somali.pdf> and <http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/oldpublication/somali1.pdf>; Sudan, [http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2015/Prestij%20Eserler/Sudan\\_Arapca-1.pdf](http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/2015/Prestij%20Eserler/Sudan_Arapca-1.pdf) and Middle East and Africa, [http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/oldpublication/afrika\\_en.pdf](http://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/oldpublication/afrika_en.pdf).

34 Having business councils in 30 African countries, DEİK organizes various business forums with trade delegations from those countries. See, for example, final report of the seminar held with African Development Bank in 2016 at [https://www.deik.org.tr/6500/Afrika\\_Kalk%C4%B1nma\\_Bankas\\_%C4%B1\\_Semineri\\_Sonu%C3%A7\\_Raporu.html](https://www.deik.org.tr/6500/Afrika_Kalk%C4%B1nma_Bankas_%C4%B1_Semineri_Sonu%C3%A7_Raporu.html) and final report of Working Lunch on Education Diplomacy with Africa held in 2015 at: [https://www.deik.org.tr/6404/Afrika\\_ile\\_E%C4%9Fitim\\_Diplomasisi\\_%C3%87a1%C4%B1%C5%9Fma\\_Yeme%C4%9Fi\\_Sonu%C3%A7\\_Raporu.html](https://www.deik.org.tr/6404/Afrika_ile_E%C4%9Fitim_Diplomasisi_%C3%87a1%C4%B1%C5%9Fma_Yeme%C4%9Fi_Sonu%C3%A7_Raporu.html). DEİK also publishes analyses about investment opportunities in different African countries.

35 For example, see MUSIAD's Africa file "Parlayan Yıldız Afrika", *Çerçeve*, 2014, [http://www.musiad.org.tr/F/Root/burcu2014/Ara%C5%9Fta%C4%B1rmlar%20Yay%C4%B1n/Pdf/%C3%87er%C3%A7eve/63\\_CERCEVE.pdf](http://www.musiad.org.tr/F/Root/burcu2014/Ara%C5%9Fta%C4%B1rmlar%20Yay%C4%B1n/Pdf/%C3%87er%C3%A7eve/63_CERCEVE.pdf) (Accessed on 10 February 2016).

KLÜ-AFRİKA (Kırklareli University African Studies Application and Research Center), established in 2011; AFESAM (the African Economic and Social Application and Research Center) within Erciyes University, established in 2012; AFRİKAM (the Africa Application and Research Center) within İstanbul Aydın University, established in 2013 and GAMAUM (the Research Center for African Civilizations) within Gazi University, established in 2013. Those centers mostly concentrate on organizing small-scale events on African issues, publishing African bulletins, analyzing recent news about Africa and issuing analyses, reports or translations of articles written by Africanist scholars.

These centers were all formed with the similar aim to contribute to a newly-emerging field in Turkey and increase awareness about African issues in Turkish academia. However, because they mostly do not employ full time staff, but rather draw on scholars from different faculties, especially from social science departments, diminishes the ability of these scholars to focus solely on their responsibilities at the centers.<sup>36</sup> Another disadvantage is that none of them teach any African languages, such as Kiswahili, Hausa or Yoruba, and most of the experts employed in those centers have not conducted any field research. Only one center published a journal specified on African issues but, as noted before, it published only two issues. Nevertheless, all of these initiatives have an important place in the still-evolving field of African studies in Turkey.

In addition to these research centers, three universities offer master programs on Africa. As discussed earlier, the first African Studies master program was set up in 1982 at Gazi University. Aiming to educate researchers and experts for the public and private sectors, universities and think tanks, the program has a comprehensive list of courses ranging from African history and foreign policy to more specific courses on African and Middle Eastern natural resources, human rights and terrorist organizations in both regions. Another MA program on Africa was established at Ankara University within IR department and started to accept student admissions in 2010. The program aims at providing the students with a general overview about Africa via courses on African anthropology, economics, history, geography, politics and law. In 2013, İstanbul Ticaret University opened an African Studies and International Relations Master Program (either with thesis or without). The program is located at a university established by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, with the primary purpose of the program being to train researchers who would like to work in public or private institutions, increase understanding of Africa in those institutions and provide data to companies operating in African countries. Currently, however, no PhD program is available on African studies.

The last decade has also seen an increase in the number of African students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs within Turkish universities. Whereas less than 100 African students studied at Turkish universities in the 1980s,<sup>37</sup> the number of scholarships provided by the Turkish government and the Council of Higher Education to students from Africa has dramatically increased in recent years. Between 1991 and 2013, the number of scholarships reached 3,254 with nearly one third provided for the 2014-2015 academic year. Turkish government now has a stronger interest in providing scholarships to Africans. It is believed that scholarships programs for African students can further contribute to economic cooperation between Turkey and Africa.<sup>38</sup> In contrast,

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36 Think tanks, on the other hand, employ master and doctorate students as well as retired senior bureaucrats as full time workers, while academics generally work part-time in these organizations. See Bilal Karabulut, "Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Think Tank Kuruluşları: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz", *Akademik Bakış*, Vol.4, No.7, 2010, p.101.

37 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkey-Africa Relations" and "Unuttuğumuz Afrika Umudumuz", *Yeni Şafak*, 5 August 2014.

38 Kieran E. Uchehara, "Economic Cooperation and Scholarship to African Countries: The Case of Turkish Government Scholarship for African Countries", *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 9, No 17, 2010, p. 77-81.

few Turkish students study in African universities. However, in 2014, three countries from Northern Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) and two countries from SSA (Ethiopia and South Africa) were added to the country list of scholarships that the Turkish Ministry of National Education provides to Turkish students who would like to pursue their graduate education abroad. The rationale, here, is to provide students with education in areas of strategic importance, in line with the new “international vision of the country.”<sup>39</sup> Since 2014, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also started to send some of its personnel to African countries for graduate education.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

For many years, African issues had low priority in both policy and academic circles. The correlation between foreign policy initiatives and scholarly work is reciprocal, with government institutions providing funding to scholars to gather practical information on particular regions, and areas of study critical to policy priorities and academics collecting information sometimes politically motivated, sometimes for purely academic purposes, in order to increase awareness about underdeveloped areas of study. In Turkey, previous governments did not consider engagement with African countries as an important foreign policy initiative which had significant effects on academic studies. However, Turkish political interest in Africa has increased after the rhetorical change in foreign policy, with the government now searching for a role as a regional and/or global player and, therefore, emphasizing its relations with once-neglected regions. With the incumbent government assigning higher priority to relations with Africa, the lowly status of countries in Africa radically changed, which had direct implications for the study of Africa. Now that African issues occupy a higher place in foreign policy priorities, it is no surprise that there is a greater exploration of African issues together with the emergence of African studies centers and graduate programs and the period following the “Year of Africa” being the most productive for the study of Africa.

By outlining Turkish scholarly work on Africa, this study has sought to explore the development of African studies in the Turkish case. It argues that despite the increase in the Africanist scholarly community and the growing body of literature on Africa, only a limited number of Turkish scholars conducts research on Africa compared with other countries. Moreover, African issues are generally considered important if they are related to Turkish foreign policy. Most studies do not focus much attention on specific issues, with some supporting the government’s African policy initiatives. Furthermore, many disciplines lack any concrete data on the continent and no African language is taught in literature departments. The weakness of African studies in Turkey is compounded by the fact that few researchers have developed projects devoted to Africa’s own problems or visited Africa in order to conduct their research, which prevents them gaining first-hand information. Despite these weaknesses, however, African studies in Turkey has made progress and is still evolving, with increasing numbers of scholarships and grants provided to African studies and an expanding and diversifying Turkish literature on African studies. It is yet to be seen whether those studies will soon create a wide-ranging academic discipline focusing on a rich diversity of topics. However, there is room to be optimistic given that such an interest towards African issues could not have even been anticipated until very recently.

39 Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (Turkish Ministry of National Education), “Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yurtdışı Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Bursu 2014 Yılı Başvuruları Başlamıştır”, 2014, <http://yyegm.meb.gov.tr/www/milli-egitim-bakanligi-yurtdisi-yuksekk-lisans-ve-doktora-bursu-2014-yili-basvurulari-baslamistir/icerik/31> (Accessed on 30 February 2015).

40 The author received the information from a Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel having his MA studies in the University of Cape Town.

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