

## **LIBYA AND TURKEY'S EXPANSION POLICY IN AFRICA**

**Hüseyin Bağcı**

[bagci@metu.edu.tr](mailto:bagci@metu.edu.tr)

Professor at Middle East Technical University (Ankara, Turkey).

**Serdar Erdurmaz**

[serdar.erdurmaz@hku.edu.tr](mailto:serdar.erdurmaz@hku.edu.tr)

Associate Professor at Kalyoncu University (Gazi Antep, Turkey).

### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes Turkey's need to make increased efforts to ameliorate relations with Libya in order to successfully advance the "African Evolution" initiatives. The study covers the AKP period since 2009, including the rebellion conducted by the Benghazi rebels up to the death of Gaddafi and the post-Gaddafi period up to now.

### **KEYWORDS**

Turkey, Libya, Africa, Terrorism, Turkish foreign policy, Middle East, AKP

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**Hüseyin Bağcı**  
**Serdar Erdurmaz**

### **1. Introduction**

In November 1996, Necmettin Erbakan, former Prime Minister, paid a visit to Muammar Gaddafi in order to collect the high amount of debt owed to Turkish contractors that had not been paid for a long time. Gaddafi had an attitude that went beyond diplomatic convention and used disturbing expressions regarding the Turkish people while addressing the Turkish Prime Minister. This is the first impression that the Turkish people had of the Libyan leader, Gaddafi, seeing him as a disrespectful desert man rather than a diplomat (NTV 2009). This event was the first to attract the attention of the Turkish people. However, mutual relations had become better since 2009 thanks to the increasing commercial, financial and political relations up to the Benghazi uprising against Gaddafi within the wave of the Arab Spring early in 2011.

At the beginning of the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi, Turkey supported Gaddafi, stating that Libya should deal with its own problem and that there was no need for any international intervention. Turkey's position regarding the rebellions made the opponents in Benghazi develop an adverse attitude towards the country. Consequently, due to the fact that Gaddafi had not changed his attitude, Turkey stopped contacts with him, which would later result in the opposition in Benghazi changing its negative attitude towards Turkey. During the civil war, thousands of Gaddafi's wounded opponents were brought to Turkish hospitals to be treated. Turkey has contributed millions of dollars to the rebellions and has hosted the transition council leaders in Turkey.

After the ouster and death of Gaddafi in late 2011, sharp divisions led to the emergence of two rival governments in the country, one based in Tobruk and the other in Tripoli, each with its own parliaments and military forces. This had a great impact on Turkish-Libya relations and because of that, Ankara backed "the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated General National Congress based in Tripoli"<sup>2</sup>. In 2015, relations between Western-backed Tobruk and Ankara deteriorated. Ultimately, Libya decided to cease all relations with Turkey and expelled all Turkish firms from Libya (Kayalioglu 2016a).

In the past, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had initiated an "African Expansion" when he was Prime Minister to improve relations in political, economic and cultural fields. The Turkish government declared 2005 as "the Year of Africa" and the country was granted observer status by the Africa Union that same year. Erdogan also visited several countries

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<sup>1</sup> Text reviewed by Carolina Peralta.

<sup>2</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/turkey-libya-economic-interests-ankara-tripoli-embassy.html>



in both Sub-Sahara (Ethiopia, South Africa) and North Africa (Tunisia and Morocco). The number of Turkish embassies increased to 39 in 2015, while in 2009 there were just 12, and Turkey opened commercial consulates in 26 African capitals (MFA 2017b). In addition, trade and economic cooperation agreements were "signed with 38 African countries, in line with efforts to establish a sound basis for mutual economic relations"<sup>3</sup>.

It is this vast scenery of Turkey's effort in the whole African continent which forces Ankara to establish good and sound relations with Libya, since Libya is a country which opens a door from the Mediterranean Sea right to the interior of Africa, stretching from the north to the middle of the continent.

Turkey with its Justice and Development Party (AKP) government would like to establish good political, economic and cultural relations with countries in North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

When one studies the relations between Turkey and Libya, it is clear that there is no dispute between the two countries about mutual national interests. The dissension was brought about by the political disparities arising over support to the National Transition Government of Libya.

If Turkey wishes to be effective in North Africa, then Ankara cannot ignore Libya and must make all political and diplomatic attempts to establish a good relationship with the current Libyan government. This article analyzes Turkey's need to make increased efforts to ameliorate relations with Libya in order to successfully advance the "African Evolution" initiatives. The study covers the AKP period since 2009, including the rebellion conducted by the Benghazi rebels up to the death of Gaddafi and the post-Gaddafi period up to now

## **2. Relations between both countries in the AKP and Gaddafi Era**

During the Gaddafi period, both sides put in efforts by common accord in order to keep Turkish-Libyan relations open to development. Minister of State Zafer Caglayan made a visit to Libya in early January 2009 during which the two countries reached an agreement regarding investment, construction, and trade.

The establishment and operation of free trade zones were on the top of the list of fields in which Turkey and Libya may enter into a partnership. A Libyan delegation visited Turkey in May 2010 under the presidency of Gamal Al Lamushe, Secretary of the Libyan Privatization and Investment Board, to discuss these matters with Turkish colleagues. An investment forum was held during the visit to bring together the companies from both countries willing to form an association. They aimed at making common investments in Africa in the fields of energy, small and medium-sized enterprises, technology, consultancy services, banking, water, transportation, tourism, education, advertising, culture, health, environment, agriculture, fishing, etc.

During the visit Prime Minister Erdogan made in 2009 November, 8 memorandums of understanding and agreements were signed regarding visa exemption, cooperation in agriculture and banking, co-investment in Africa, and transportation. Besides, during the visit of Mustafa Muhammad Abdul Jalil, the Libyan General People's Committee Secretary for Justice, Turkey and Libya signed a Judicial Cooperation Agreement. Both countries

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<sup>3</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>



agreed to sign new agreements in the future, such as prevention of double taxation and economic partnership in order to reinforce their cooperation.

With regard to the economic cooperation agreement, 3 rounds of negotiations were completed, and it was decided that the fourth round would be held in May 2010 in Ankara. Likewise, negotiation processes were continued regarding cooperation agreements in education, culture, science, youth, sports, fishing, employment, illegal immigration, foundation of a joint chamber of trade, and cooperation between Red Crescents of the two countries.

The total number of projects that Turkish construction companies undertook in Libya in the 2009-2010 period was reported to be 124. Leading construction companies such as Dogus, Guris, Nurol, Metis, Tekfen and Yuksel Insaat were some of the companies working in Libya. The works undertaken in the 2009-2010 period include 1013 house projects in the Al Falah region of Tripoli by Tasyapı, the Burj Al Baher Commercial Centre, the Hotel and Housing Project by Summa Libya, and the construction of the Sirte-Huon energy transportation lines by Mitas. Besides, SEGA Insaat undertook all the infrastructure works in Gariat Sharkiya city, the Cevahir Group built the Benghazi Shopping Mall and Celtikoglu Insaat carried out the Wadi al Mejaneen Sewerage Construction Project in Tripoli. Teknik Yapı undertook a luxurious housing project worth 150 billion Euros on a 50 thousand square meters area in Tripoli which was declared a tourism area in Libya.

The trade volume between the two countries was 1.4 billion US dollars in 2008. This rate increased by 57% in 2009 and reached 2.2 billion US dollars. This number was expected to rise to 10 billion US dollars in the next five years. Before the rebellion, there were 120 registered Turkish companies in Libya during the Gaddafi period, working in various infrastructure and superstructure projects.

Considering the abovementioned issues, it is clear that during the Gaddafi rule, Turkey and Libya established a fairly good and close cooperation. Prime Minister Erdogan stated in regard to the rebellions intended to overthrow the Gaddafi regime, which came about with the Arab Spring, that the Libyan problem was a domestic problem which should be sorted out within the country. The good relations Turkey enjoyed with Libya was a reasonable ground for this statement. It is possible to think that, with such a statement, Turkey intended to maintain the existing balance with the Gaddafi regime.

However, this attitude changed given France's and the UK's demands for individual intervention. Opposing the NATO intervention initially, Turkey supported the intervention under the umbrella of NATO later on.

### **3. Turkey and the uprising**

Turkey was involved in the Libyan issue from the start to solve the problem of evacuating its citizens who had been carrying out big investments there. While Turkey adopted the principle of securing the life and safety of Turkish citizens as its top priority, it was in continuous contact with Gaddafi to make him take into account demands of Libyans peacefully. These political developments led the opponents in Benghazi to develop an adverse attitude towards Turkey. There was no change in Gaddafi's attitude, thus Turkey stopped its contact with him.



Turkey's attitude changed the adverse mood in Benghazi in favor of Turkey. Additionally, Turkey's humanitarian rescue transporting Libyan patients to Turkey, and the aids of the Turkish Red Crescent and Ministry of Health in Benghazi and in the surrounding regions brought the Libyan people closer to Turkey. Turkey manifested an active policy despite all the plots of France. Turkey changed its initial attitude, and became active by taking a passive role in the air and at sea as part of NATO. Besides, Izmir Joint Air Headquarters played a part in the Operation Unified Protector.

Turkey opposed the rumors pointing to a solution implying elimination of the territorial integrity by separating the Eastern and Western part of Libya during the first days of the rebellion. It highlighted the need to respect the territorial integrity principle, insisted on the indivisibility of natural resources, and emphasized that such natural resources belonged to the Libyan people.

Turkey kept the relations with the National Transition Council (NTC) warm through the visits of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and of the Prime Minister and through monetary help. Thus, they kept the way open for cooperation with the future government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu made two visits to Benghazi, one in July and the other in August.

Compared to European countries, Turkey was the country making the most concrete efforts to meet the basic needs urgently demanded by the NTC. Turkey's attempts to develop relations with the NTC included opening a line of credit for Libya, providing donations to the country, confiscating Gaddafi's assets in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions, and transferring the Arab Turkish Bank to a Savings Deposit Insurance Fund. In addition, Turkey contributed, together with Qatar, to the supply of oil to the opponents in Benghazi.

All the commercial activities conducted by Turkish companies on Libya territories were welcomed by the NTC. It was stated that more activities will be requested.

Besides, by hosting the Contact Group meetings held on 15 July, Turkey presented its active role and legitimized this role. At the end of September, Prime Minister Erdogan made a visit to Libya after Egypt and Tunisia. The visit and address he made to Libyans had great repercussions in the world.

The active stance demonstrated by Turkey from the first day of the outbreak has been carefully observed by European countries. In other words, Turkey is not an observing and monitoring country; quite the opposite, it is being observed as well as being determinant while influencing others.

Apart from this, Turkey granted monetary aid to the National Transitional Council (NTC). It was prescribed that Turkey would give 300 million dollars in total. Of this amount, 100 million dollars would be a donation, 100 million dollars would be in the form of credit in return for projects and 100 million dollars would be through cash credit. The cash was deposited into NTC's account opened in the Central Bank in Ankara. Ten million dollars out of the 100-million-dollar cash aid was sent on 27 July and the remaining 90 million dollars were delivered to the NTC authorities who came on 8, 10 and 21 August. These authorities took this money on a Libyan aircraft. In the explanation given by the National Transitional Council on 31 July 2011, it was said that the rebels were given 200 million dollars by Turkey (Hurriyet 2011).



In addition, Turkey was a country approved by Libya in terms of construction, zoning and settlement. Libya was one of the countries where Turkish companies were working very actively. The new government's recognition and acceptance of cooperation was left half-finished due to the start of the rebellions. Completion of such works will make it easier for Turkey to undertake new responsibilities in the reconstruction process. Thus, the NTC made demands regarding this issue, and relevant promises were made. After all, Turkey was ready to take the necessary role in Libya as a democratic Muslim country.

#### **4. Libya After Gaddafi and Turkey**

The most serious problem was the lack of security due to the failure to disarm and demobilize rebel militias after the war (Chivvis, Christopher S. Martini 2014).

In the aftermath of the revolution in 2012, the elected National General Council was an institution accepted by different segments of the society. In August 2012, the NTC transferred power to the General National Congress (GNC), an elected parliament which went on to select an interim president of state. And 2012 and 2013 were years when hopes and political expectations were high in the country. In this reconstruction period, Turkey's general approach was to support it and to respond to Libya's requests. However, Libya was undergoing a different cycle whereby violence was being used as a policy by General Khalifa Haftar, who had made a military coup in the beginning of 2014. As a result, eastern Libya was under the control of armed forces under the command of General Haftar, while independent armed groups were providing security in the western and southern regions. Ultimately, a crisis emerged with three different councils and governments claiming to be legitimate official organizations governing the country.

The Transition Government and the Parliament of National Council founded in Tripoli in 2011 constituted the most radical Islamist segment. On 25 June, this Parliament set up an election in which participation was 25 per cent, but this rate decreased to 15 per cent after the Elections Council cancelled the votes. After the unsuccessful election, another new government was established by General Khalifa Haftar in Tobruk, who declared that he would fight the radical Islamist terror.

Initially Ankara rejected to recognize the Tobruk Parliament and government, which was recognized by the UN Security Council, the U.S.A., the European Union, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates etc. as an official government of Libya. President Erdogan's reaction in 2014 was "Turkey could not accept the Libyan legislature's meeting in Tobruk" (Gmbwatch 2014) (Levent 2014). According to this announcement, "Western allies supported the UN-recognized government in Tobruk, while Ankara backed the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated General National Congress based in Tripoli"<sup>4</sup>. Immediately after this statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Libya claimed that it was "a blatant interference in Libyan internal affairs" and recalled its Ambassador (Gmbwatch 2014). In the aftermath of this dispute, the relations between the two countries deteriorated (Kayalioglu 2016). The Tobruk administration announced that Turkish citizens must leave Libya, and this meant the need to cease all diplomatic relations. Accordingly, in July, Ankara was forced to close its Embassy in Libya. In addition, the Libyan Prime Minister Thinni stated that Turkish contractors should lose

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<sup>4</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/turkey-libya-economic-interests-ankara-tripoli-embassy.html>



their hopes as they were planning not to let Turkish companies work in Libya anymore, and they would be banned from the government's bids. This decision made Turkish companies actually unable to work in the country (Erdogan and Çelik 2015).

On 3 January 2014, though Libya showed signs of uncertainty, the Prime Minister of Libya, Ali Zeidan, paid a visit to Turkey and signed a common declaration to establish High Level Strategic Cooperation, and Ankara announced that it would continue to give support to political and economic reconciliation efforts in Libya (*The Tripoli Post* 2014). In this vein, Turkish companies returned to Libya, especially for construction businesses, but since there was a bipolar political structure, they were forced to withdraw tenders and get back to Turkey. Very few did business, at the cost of some 168 million US dollars (Ipek 2016).

On 17 December 2015, representatives from Tripoli and Tobruk signed a UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement based on four principles: "*ensuring the democratic rights of the Libyan people; a consensual government based on the principle of the separation of powers, oversight and balance; empowering state institutions to address the serious challenges ahead; and, respect for the Libyan judiciary and its independence*" (Apap 2016). On 15 February 2016, the UN-backed Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA), with Fayez Al-Sarraj as Prime Minister, was nominated by Libya's Presidential Council (LPC). The GNA finally moved to Tripoli on 30 March 2016. Now there were three different structures claiming to have power and govern the country (Hall 2016), even though the Libyan Government of National Accord had the support of the United Nations and the European Union (Apap 2016). The GNA seemed to fill the power gap, and succeed in unifying the country's two rival groups and also in the fight against ISIL and other terrorist actions in future.

At the moment, Libya has three different power centers; the first is the UN-backed Presidential Council (PC) located in the Ebu Sittah navy base near Tripoli since 30 March 2016. The PC is headed by Fayez al-Sarraj according to the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in December 2015 (Hall 2016). The PC presides over the Government of National Accord which should be endorsed by the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, it has not happened so far. The other is the Government of National Salvation, based in Tripoli and headed by Prime Minister Khalifa Ghwell, taking the authority from the General National Congress (GNC) as a result of the 2012 election. This formation used to be supported by Turkey. However, Ankara gave its support to the UN-brokered government at the meeting held in Rome in December 2015 (MFA 2015a). The latest center of power is based either in Tobruk or al Bayda, and has also been approved by the Government of National Accord. This power, headed by Abdullah al Thinni, is under the control of Egyptian-aligned, anti-Islamist general Khalifa Haftar, who leads the Libyan National Army (LNA) (Fitzgerald 2017).

Of these three power centers, the one controlled by Hkalifa Haftar (BBC Africa 2016) is the most powerful right now. The government in Tobruk-al Bayda has gained the support of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, France (BBC 2016), and Russia (Abdessadok 2017). Egypt is currently the most powerful ally of Libya. Tobruk and Egypt share the same political aims, which is to eradicate radical Islam and enhance the autonomy of eastern Libya. Arms delivery is also another important question for the two countries (Fitzgerald 2017). Turkey and Qatar do not have the same influence on the Tobruk government that Egypt and the UAE have on it, even though they think that have sufficient influence upon Libya (Fitzgerald 2017). Turkey and Qatar have been accused



of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood segment in Libya by the Khalifa Haftar side (Cafiero and Wagner 2015).

Since March 2016, the GNA has controlled ministries and government facilities in the capital. Recently, Libya's foreign minister announced at a news conference that Haftar will be appointed commander in chief of the Libyan army, on the condition that he accepts the GNA as the governing authority. Nevertheless, this has not happened (Abdessadok 2017).

Emrullah Isler, former vice prime minister, was nominated by President Erdogan as a special envoy and sent to Libya to visit both Tripoli and Tobruk for purposes of reconciliation between the two countries. Over the two days, Isler met the Presidency Council head Faiez Serraj, the PC member Abdelsalam Kajman, the acting defense minister Al-Mahdi Al-Barghathi, the State Council head Abdul Rahman Sewehli, the head of the new Presidential Guard Najmi Al-Nakua, and Misrata mayor Mohamed Eshtewi, among others (*Libya Herald* 2016). At this meeting, Isler explained that Ankara wanted to reopen the embassy, to resume Turkish Airlines flights to Libya and the construction work at the 640-MW power plant in Obari. Enka Engineering had started work on it before the revolution, but it was stopped in 2011. The work recommenced in October 2012 but was again suspended in September 2014 because of the security situation in the area (*Libya Herald* 2016). However, positive results could not be obtained from these efforts because of the instability of the Libyan political situation. Even though he said that Ankara was keen to negotiate with all sides, he was informed of the rumors that Ankara had backed the Islamist side, which created lack of confidence between the two countries (Hoog 2014).

Ankara participated at a meeting held in Rome/Italy and signed a "Joint Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting for Libya" on 13 December 2015. The main topic of the declaration was to support the GNA<sup>5</sup>.

*"We affirm our full support for the Libyan people in maintaining the unity of Libya and its institutions that function for the benefit of the whole Country. A **Government of National Accord** based in the capital Tripoli is urgently needed to provide Libya the means to maintain governance, promote stability and economic development. We stand with all Libyans who have demanded the swift formation of a Government of National Accord based upon the Skhirat Agreement, including representatives of the majority members of the House of Representatives and General National Congress, Independents, Municipalities, political parties, and civil society who convened in Tunis on 10-11 December. We welcome the announcement that the Libya political dialogue members will sign the political agreement in Skhirat on 16 December. We encourage all political actors to sign this final agreement on 16 December and call on all Libyans to unite behind the Libya Political Agreement and the Government of National Accord".*

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<sup>5</sup> Consulted online at [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-communicue-of-the-ministerial-meeting-for-libya\\_-13-december-2015\\_-rome\\_-italy.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-communicue-of-the-ministerial-meeting-for-libya_-13-december-2015_-rome_-italy.en.mfa)



Together with all other countries, the USA, England, Germany, France, European Union, Ankara expressed its full support to the GNA to fight all kind of terrorist action, including the ISIL.

*"A Government of National Accord is essential to address, in partnership with the international community, the country's critical humanitarian, economic, and security challenges, including ISIL and other extremist groups and criminal organizations engaged in all forms of smuggling and trafficking, including in human beings" (MFA 2015b).*

"Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended the signing ceremony of the Libyan Political Agreement on 17 December 2015"<sup>6</sup>, and delivered a speech, as a concrete manifestation of our solidarity with the brotherly Libyan people. According to the press release:

*"We believe that the basis of national reconciliation will further broaden in the upcoming period and all the Libyan people will contribute to the success of a broad-based **Government of National Accord**, to be formed pursuant to the Agreement.*

*Turkey will contribute by any means to the efforts of the **Government of National Accord** to establish security and stability in the country during the transition process" (MFA 2015c).*

Turkey also signed the Ministerial Meeting for Libya Joint Communique held in Vienna on 16 May 2016, strongly supporting the GNA together with all other participant countries<sup>7</sup>;

*"... We express our strong support for the Libyan people in maintaining the unity of Libya. We reaffirm our support for the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) of Skhirat, Morocco signed on 17 December 2015, and for the Government of National Accord (GNA) as the sole legitimate government of Libya, as stated in the Rome Communique of 13 December 2015, and endorsed in UN Security Council Resolution 2259. We urge all parties to work constructively towards the completion of the transitional institutional framework, particularly by enabling the House of Representatives to fully carry out its role as outlined in the LPA ..."*  
(MFA 2016).

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<sup>6</sup> Consulted online at [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-311\\_-18-december-2015\\_-press-release-regarding-the-signing-of-the-libyan-political-agreement.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-311_-18-december-2015_-press-release-regarding-the-signing-of-the-libyan-political-agreement.en.mfa)

<sup>7</sup> Ministerial Meeting for Libya Joint Communique, 16 May 2016, Vienna, Algeria, Chad, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Niger, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, United Nations, the League of Arab States, and the African Union.



On 30 May 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu visited Libya and said, after meeting his Libyan counterpart Mohammed Siyala and Prime Minister Fayez Seraj at the naval base, that Turkey is eager to be the first to re-open an embassy in Libya (Reuters 2016). Cavusoglu also pledged Turkish support for the government's efforts to restore stability and security to Libya, and reiterated the importance that Turkey hoped to have through its economic presence in the North African state. He stressed that Turkish companies are waiting with determination to continue their work and resume their activities in Libya in the sectors of transport and energy (Reuters 2016). To revive relations, both sides have been dwelling on the importance of economic and commercial cooperation as a leading reason (Kayalioglu 2016b).

As can be seen by the above efforts made by Ankara, Turkey has been trying all kinds of instruments to reestablish good relations with the UN and western backed-government (GNA) and is committed to give all support to the GNA to fight terrorism and extreme Islamist formations. Ankara has adopted a new policy approach to act together with the UN and other countries backing the GNA to provide stability and the dominance of the GNA government in Libya. Thus, Turkey refrains from diverging from other countries and to act against the will of Libyan people.

## **5. Turkey's Expansion Policy in Africa.**

The relations with African countries begun to improve with Turkey's opening policy to Africa by means of the Action Plan adopted in 1998 (MFA 2017a). Five years later, a strategy document "on the Development of the Economic Relations with African Countries was prepared by the Under secretariat for Foreign Trade in 2003"<sup>8</sup>.

Subsequently, in 2005 mutual visits improved the economic relations between Turkey and African countries initiated by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (RTE), when he was prime minister, in the framework of the "African Expansion" plan (MFA 2017b). RTE was the first high level political figure who paid a visit to Sub-Saharan countries in the same year. RTE was the first non-African leader who visited Somalia in 20 years and he renewed his visit in 2013 and 2015, as President in the last one. Abdullah Gul has paid 4 visits to Africa in his presidency. These official visits by high level authorities were very important due to the fact that before 2005 there had not been a visit to this continent and no relations had been established.

Turkish-African Summit meetings have been held either in Turkey or African countries in order to determine the policies to improve mutual relations and ultimately, new cooperation and application programs have been accepted following these summits. As a result, Turkey was granted observer status by the African Union in 2005. In 2008, Ankara became a strategic partner of the African Union and a non-regional member of the Africa Development Bank in the same year (MFA 2017a).

Furthermore, on 18-21 August 2008, the "Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit" was held in Istanbul with the participation of 49 African countries. "The Istanbul Declaration on Turkey-Africa Partnership: Cooperation and Solidarity for a Common Future" and

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<sup>8</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>



"Cooperation Framework for Turkey-Africa Partnership", which was adopted during the First Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit of 2008, established a follow-up mechanism.

Accordingly, the High-Level Officials Meeting was held on 15 December 2010. The Ministerial Level Reviewing Conference took place on 16 December 2011, in Istanbul. Within the framework of the said follow-up mechanism, the "Second Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit" was held on 19-21 November 2014 in Malabo (Equatorial Guinea)<sup>9</sup>. Later on, Turkey organized twice the Istanbul Somalia Conferences within the UN framework, on 21-23 May 2010 and on 31 May-1 June 2012, respectively. Turkey also eagerly hosted the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Istanbul on 9-13 May 2011 and offered to host the Mid-Term Review Conference of the Istanbul Action Program in 2015. Lastly, Turkey hosted the High Level Partnership Forum for Somalia on 23-24 February 2016 in İstanbul (MFA 2017a).

The African Union Second Summit was held in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea, on 19-21 November 2014, on the theme "A New Model of Partnership for the Strengthening of Sustainable Development and Integration". The Summit started with the High-Level Officials Meeting on 19 November. It was followed by the Ministerial Meeting on 20 November. And on 21 November, the actual Summit was held. It adopted a Declaration and Joint Implementation Plan for the Period of 2015-2019. In accordance with the decision made at the Summit, the Third Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit will be held in Turkey in 2019 (MFA 2017a).

Turkey will remain committed to support the institutional capacities of the African Union and other regional organizations in achieving progress on the priority areas which will consolidate African ownership of African matters. Turkey has been making a financial contribution of 1 million US Dollars to the African Union since 2009. Turkey also contributes to regional organizations when the need arises (MFA 2017a).

While the number of Turkey's embassies in Africa was 12 in 2009, by 2015 this number had increased to 39. The same applied to embassies from African countries, which were initially 10 in Ankara and rose to 31 in 2015. As part of this expansion policy, the Turkish Air Ways organized more than 40 flights to 28 African countries.

Turkish contractors are amongst the major undertakers in the continent. The share of Turkish contractors in the overall international business volume in African countries is around 21 percent (the share of North Africa is 19%). So far, Turkish contractors have carried out over 1.150 projects worth 55 billion USD in Africa.

There are ever growing Turkish investments, many exemplary of their kind, in a number of African countries that employ local labor force, use home-produced resources and export final products to third countries. In this regard, total Turkish investment in Africa is estimated to be around 6,2 billion USD. According to a report published in October 2015 (*Financial Times*), Turkish investment in Africa creates the largest number of jobs in the continent (16.593 in 2014) compared to the other foreign direct investments there (MFA 2017a).

Turkey removed visas for diplomatic passport holders from 17 African countries. African businessmen and tourists travelling with Turkish airlines and holding a valid Schengen, USA or UK visa, can obtain their entry visas to Turkey at the Ataturk Airport in Istanbul.

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<sup>9</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>



The Yunus Emre Association has established a Turkish Cultural Center in Khartoum. The Association is planning to open new centers in Pretoria, Djibouti, the Gambia and Niger (MFA 2017a).

All these achievements have been realized by President Erdogan, who has visited 23 different countries between 2004-2017 (En Son Haber 2017), and signed 19 agreements, the latest with Tanzania and Eastern Africa (Toprak 2017).

*"In line with the improvement in diplomatic relations, Turkey has opened commercial consulates in 26 African capitals. In addition, the Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Council established business councils with 19 Sub-Saharan countries. Ankara has also signed trade and economic cooperation agreements with 38 African countries, in line with mutual beneficial economic relations"<sup>10</sup>.*

The bilateral trade volume of Turkey with various countries in Africa has reached 17.5 billion USD in 2015. Trade volume with Sub-Saharan Africa was 6 billion USD in 2015. This indicates a drop in Turkey's trade with the continent, in line with the decrease in global trade. Despite this fact, Turkey's share in Africa's total trade has remained almost the same (DEIK 2016).

The economic relations between Turkey and African countries have gained particular importance since in 2011-2015, and have been the focus of a much more determined political strategy by Turkey. In this period, while total exports from Turkey to the African countries amounted to 64 billion US dollars, the foreign trade volume was 93.8 billion US dollars. In 2011-2015, Egypt came first with approximately 17 billion US dollar exports from Turkey. However, North African Countries have taken precedence in foreign trade. Algeria follows Egypt with approximately 10 billion US dollars, Libya with 9 billion 120 million US dollars, Morocco with some 6 billion US dollars and Tunisia with 4 billion 225 million US dollars, respectively (*Sabah Newspaper 2017*).

Obviously, all economic relations with Libya were ceased after the diplomatic conflict between the Tobruk government, under the leadership of Khalifa Haftar, and Ankara in 2014.

## **6. Conclusions**

Ankara has realized that Libya is very important and that two main aims need to be fulfilled; first Turkey must restore its position to how it used to be in Gaddafi's time in order to ensure that Turkish companies receive the payments owed before the turmoil. Ankara can only have a position in Libya with its full political, economic and cultural assets. "This conciliatory approach towards Libya means that Ankara is abandoning its pro-Muslim Brotherhood stance in its regional policy and this is a good example to other African countries that suffer from extreme Islamic terrorist organizations either in North Africa or in the Sub-Saharan region<sup>11</sup>". This approach would enable establishing a close

<sup>10</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>

<sup>11</sup> Consulted online at <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/turkey-libya-economic-interests-ankaratripoli-embassy.html>



relationship with those countries against the Muslim Brotherhood or similar groups. This new approach certainly would facilitate re-establishing mutual confidence between the two governments to improve political relations, to start with, with economic and other relations coming later. In this vein, Ankara should keep its sensitive and unbiased position towards any kind of formation that threatens the GNA government, just like other western and eastern countries. Turkey should also make all efforts to heal the relations with Egypt to suppress its ascendancy over Libya. Turkey's hostility towards President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government plays to the advantage of Egypt's policy on Libya against Ankara. If this change, the hot potato, Ankara backed Muslim Brotherhood, would pass on to the hands of Egypt and there would be no excuse for Cairo to clearly support Khalife Haftar. As a result, Ankara could contribute to establishing stability and security in Libya by giving its full support to the GNA government. This would be the best public diplomatic sign of opening towards the Libyan people, gaining their support again".

Second, the opening of the African strategy will not be successful if Libya remains out of this process. Turkey is the only Muslim country to try an opening, especially since 2000's. A new approach towards Libya will pave the way for other North African countries to strengthen relations with Ankara.

Above all, Libya is a main gate from the Mediterranean Sea to gain access to the oil rich interior African countries (i.e. Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan). For that reason, it has geo-strategic importance for all European countries due to its oil rich position. Ankara cannot enter the North Africa region if it neglects Libya, which is the reason why Libya is one of the most important priorities for Turkey in its Africa Opening Policy.

Turkey seems aware that it is important that Libya should be governed by a stable and democratic government and it should change its policy towards Libya and support the UN-backed regime from now on. This would guarantee that relations between the two countries would strengthen and that Ankara will be viewed favorably by Libyan politicians in the near future.

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