

# A Founding Role in Türkiye's Africa Policy: The Action Plan for Opening to Africa

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**ABSTRACT** *In direct proportion to the development of Türkiye's relations with Africa, the number of studies on bilateral relations is also increasing. However, the Action Plan for Opening to Africa, which was prepared in 1998, is a milestone in Türkiye's relations with Africa and has not been examined specifically and in-depth. This study aims to examine all aspects of the Action Plan for Opening to Africa, which plays a founding role in Türkiye's Africa policy. In this context, the focus is on the content of the plan, the internal and external developments that brought it about, and the role of foreign policymakers who put these developments through the filter of their perception. To guide the analysis of these issues focused on in the study, role theory and documentary source screening based on Ministry of Foreign Affairs sources were used to examine the Action Plan. As a result of the study, it has been observed that the systemic conditions affecting Turkish foreign policy after the Cold War and the Action Plan put forward as a visionary foreign policy step by İsmail Cem, who served as the foreign minister, especially under the conditions of coalition governments, played a founding role in Türkiye's relations with the continent.*

**Keywords:** Opening Action Plan, Africa, İsmail Cem, Role Theory, Turkish Foreign Policy

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## Introduction

**T**ürkiye-Africa relations have seen incomparably faster development in the last quarter of a century. In the process that started with the Action Plan for Opening to Africa in 1998, Türkiye declared the “Year of Africa” in 2005 and became an observer member of the African Union. At the First Türkiye-Africa Partnership Summit held in İstanbul on August 18-21, 2008, Türkiye was accepted as a strategic partner by the African Union. The second summit was held in Maloba on November 19-21, 2014, and the third was held in İstanbul on December 16-18, 2021. While the policy of opening to Africa, which was initiated in 1998, turned into a partnership policy in 2013, Türkiye’s relations with the continent gained a multidimensional and profound continuity, including political, commercial, military development, and cultural aspects, after the opening gained ground.<sup>1</sup>

Türkiye’s relations with African countries, the vast majority of which gained independence with the decolonization process in the 1960s, were hindered due to the effects of the Cold War, as well as issues such as coups in Türkiye, the problem of terrorism, and economic difficulties. Although Africa was put on the agenda for the first time in Turkish foreign policy to provide support for Cyprus after the 1964 Johnson Letter crisis, continuity in this policy could not be achieved. The Action Plan for Opening to Africa, which was put forward in November 1998, could not be fully implemented due to the issues arising from the coalition governments and other problems such as the 2000-2001 economic crisis; however, it overlapped with the multidimensional foreign policy perspective of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government that took office in 2002 and progressed with the economic concentration on Africa in 2003 and the declaration of 2005 as the “Year of Africa.” It continued to gain continuity and dynamism in the following years.<sup>2</sup> The Action Plan has played a founding role in activism, visionary, and strategic importance in Türkiye’s relations with sub-Saharan Africa and when considered together with before and after, deserves to be examined in detail.

This study is based on three main arguments. First, the Action Plan for Opening to Africa has played a foundational role in Türkiye’s relations with the continent. Second, three factors in line with the role theory, namely leadership combining idea and practice (İsmail Cem), domestic political conditions, and external developments, were influential in the emergence of the Action Plan. Third, due to the importance of the Action Plan, it needs to be examined more deeply.

In parallel with Türkiye’s developing relations with Africa for the last quarter of a century, academic studies on this subject are also increasing. However, the majority of these studies do not delve into the content of this Action Plan,

being content with stating that it started in 1998.<sup>3</sup> In this study, while the content of the Action Plan for Opening to Africa is examined in depth, the reasons that give rise to it are also discussed. In this context, this Action Plan, which was carried out under the leadership of İsmail Cem, who served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the ANASOL-D (Motherland Party/ANAP, Democratic Left Party/DSP, Democrat Türkiye Party/DTP) coalition government established in Türkiye in 1997, cannot be separated from the domestic and foreign political developments of the period and requires a holistic perspective.

## **In the process that started with the Action Plan for Opening to Africa in 1998, Türkiye declared the “Year of Africa” in 2005 and became an observer member of the African Union**

Numerous studies in the relevant literature assume that internal and international factors have an impact on foreign policy behavior and that these influences operate through the foreign policy elite responsible for determining, deciding, and implementing actions in foreign policy. In these studies, the perceptions and belief systems of policymakers toward their internal and external environments can be important variables in explaining the change in foreign policy. For example, Aras and Görener in their study titled “National Role Conceptions and Foreign Policy Orientation,” Holsti’s “Why Nations Re-align,” and Kupchan’s “The Vulnerability of Empire” can be given as examples such approaches.<sup>4</sup>

Role theory will be used in this study to analyze the birth and development of this Action Plan, which has had a founding role in Türkiye’s Africa policy since its announcement. Role theory takes into account the influence of the intra-state and international systemic environment in the perceptions and decisions of the elites who design foreign policy (in this study, the foreign policy team led by İsmail Cem).<sup>5</sup> In other words, for the analysis of such a decision, which represents a strategic and visionary step in foreign policy, first of all, questions about the individual/leadership profile of the architect of this plan, then-Foreign Minister İsmail Cem, internal conditions in Türkiye and international systemic effects to domestic politics should be answered.

In this respect, role theory will be discussed in the study. Secondly, the general position of Turkish foreign policy, especially in the post-Cold War period conditions, and the internal and external developments before the Action Plan will be examined. Thirdly, the role of İsmail Cem in the emergence of the Action Plan for Opening to Africa and the content of this Action Plan will be presented in all their dimensions. The review of the Opening to Africa Action Plan will be carried out per the sources of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>6</sup>

## Role Theory

Role theory, which emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, deals with patterns of human behavior. The theory applies the concept of a “role,” which was initially borrowed from the theater (stage), to the functioning of the social order in relation to social psychology, sociology, and anthropology with the characteristics and behavior of the individuals who constituted it. Later, the concept was adopted by international relations academics to understand and explain the foreign policy behavior of a state.<sup>7</sup>

Role theory, from a symbolic interactionist point of view, depicts existing patterns or structures as emerging from the interaction between actors. The theory, which comes from the tradition of symbolic interaction, can be associated with constructivism<sup>8</sup> but differs from it in its understanding of the concept of identity. Although roles and identity are interrelated concepts, they also have unique conceptual features. Identity lacks agency, as it does not have an action-oriented meaning in its essence. Thus, the way to make connections between identity and action through motivational tendencies is through roles and becomes a tool in this sense.<sup>9</sup>

The most important proponent of role theory in international relations is Holsti and his work is built on three main concepts of role theory: role performance, role prescriptions (expectations), and national role conceptions.<sup>10</sup> The role performance emphasized in Holsti’s role theory, which expresses the general foreign policy behavior of governments (their attitudes, decisions, and actions in foreign policy), occurs at the intersection of three things (and in our opinion, the rate at which they influence foreign policy is as follows, from least to most): The first is role prescriptions, which are open to change under changing conditions and arise from the external environment (and are presented through culture, social structure, laws, organizations, international system, obligations arising from agreements, and thoughts of world public opinion). The second is the “nation’s status” or “self-defined national role conception,” which attaches importance to the position of political parties, government, interest groups within the state, socioeconomic and social values, and the resources, interests, and expectations of the state. The third is the ego’s role, or “policymakers’ national role conceptions,” which are characterized by goals, attitudes, values, ideologies, and personality traits.<sup>11</sup>

Role prescriptions refer to the norms and expectations placed on an actor by cultures, societies, or institutions in the system. The appropriateness of an actor’s behavior is largely directly related to “what other actors in the community expect from him.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, the actor who is assigned the role is expected to act per the role. In addition, the form of expectation can produce roles for different reasons, and these expectations are shaped

by norms, beliefs, and preferences (attitudes).<sup>13</sup>

Norms, identities, values, culture, and the role preferences they entail are seen as motivating factors for state behavior in international politics.<sup>14</sup> In role theory, which includes agent-structure interaction in role formation, role actors are not only those who take on roles but can also play a part in role-producing or role-building.<sup>15</sup> In other words, foreign policymakers may be determining elements rather than simply

following prescriptions. As will be examined in detail below, Türkiye's Action Plan for Opening to Africa during the İsmail Cem era is a good example of offering prescriptions or role-building in this direction.

Conceptions of national roles embody subjective insights that help policy-makers position their states in line with what they want to represent in the international system. Role theory underlines "the interaction between the external variables that make demands on the actor and the interests and goals that the actor sets for himself."<sup>16</sup> They constitute the basics of the standards and norms that shape government actions and reactions under different conditions. Role theory proposes that the actions of states are to the extent required by their characteristics, taking into account internal and external developments of decision-makers as determinants of foreign policy behavior.<sup>17</sup>

When it comes to foreign policy, the elites are the ones with the greatest authority in making foreign policy decisions. As constructivism suggests, when the international system is analyzed as a social structure, each nation has many national roles or social positions in its relations with other nations. Their understanding of the national role includes their perceptions/thoughts of foreign policymakers regarding the decisions, commitments, rules, and long-term actions they deem appropriate for their nation under the conditions of the international system.<sup>18</sup>

Under the dynamic conditions of the international system, the understanding of the national role includes "road maps" due to the strategies and objectives that the state should follow. The road maps are influenced by the cultural codes from which the decision-maker emerges and, in the end, may not be able to create perceptions that everyone agrees on in the country. In addition, the actor's perceptions of the role he has acquired from domestic politics and the role

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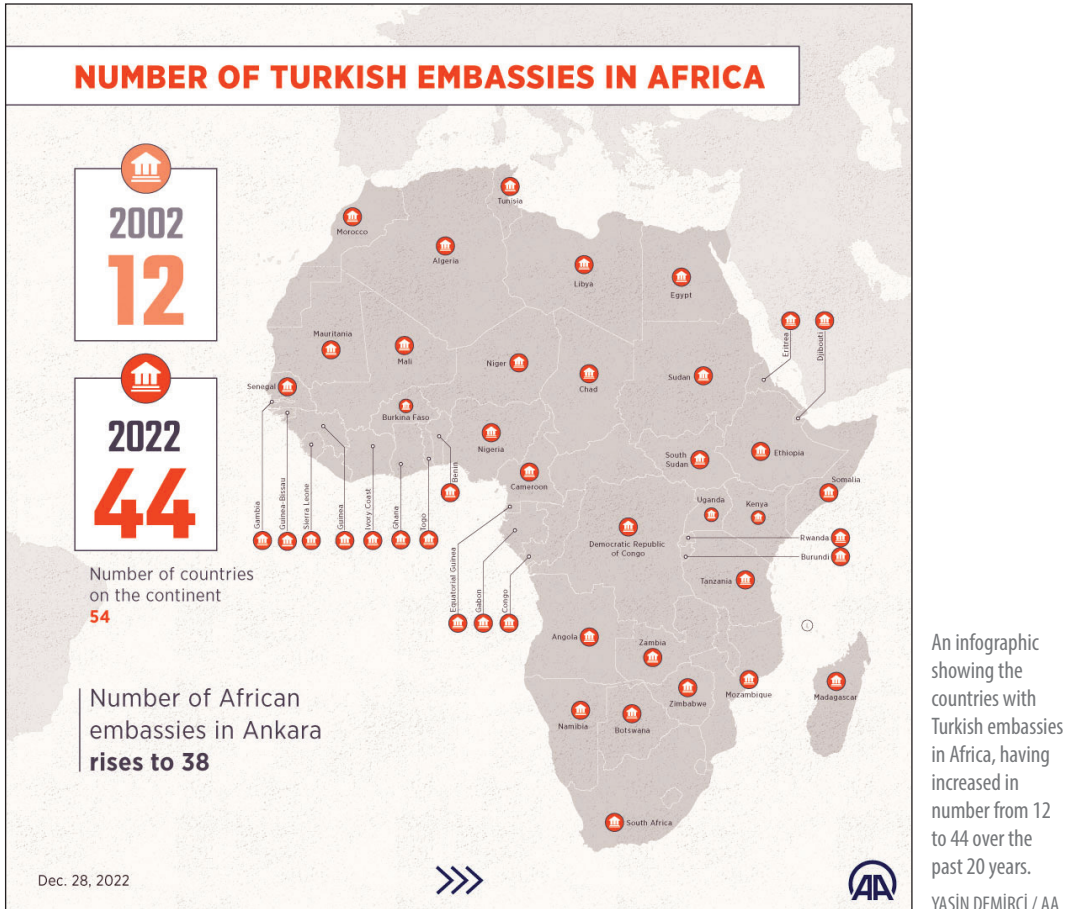
## The security concerns that the Soviet Union created for Türkiye after Second World War formed the main line of Turkish foreign policy in the period known as the Cold War

prescriptions he has acquired as a result of socialization in the international system may coincide or conflict. Role conflict may occur if the actor's perception of the role in his imagination does not match the roles that others have assigned to him, or if it is unclear which of them will be prioritized in cases where more than one role is adopted.<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes one or more of the terms “neutral,” “collaborator,” “aggressor,” “mediator,” “regional leader” and “anti-imperialist” are used to refer to states. For example, the national role conceptions in Holsti's study include: “anti-imperialist agent, defender of the faith, mediator-integrator, regional-subsystem collaborator, bastion of revolution-liberator, regional leader, regional protector, active independent, liberator supporter, developer, faithful ally, independent, bridge, example, internal development, isolate, protector and other (defender of the peace, balancer, communist agent/anti-revisionist/Zionist).”<sup>20</sup> Characterizations of such different perceptions of roles stem from the actions of the actors and the decisions they make. In the field of foreign policy, decision-makers believe that their state should undertake and fulfill a set of duties, tasks, and commitments in the regional or international system.<sup>21</sup>

It can be said that the traditional view that states essentially perform a single function or play a single role in international politics is incomplete. So much so that within a state's region or across the globe, there may be different sets of relationships and multiple roles. Sometimes, however, foreign policy decision-makers may re-evaluate their duties, commitments, and functions in relation to specific countries or regions. Thus, they are on the verge of moving away from their traditional conception of national roles (or a particular earlier understanding of roles) and tend to define new ones.<sup>22</sup> For example, according to N. B. Wish, nations whose leaders perceive dominant roles and/or roles that affect large areas of space are more likely to join the international system while nations whose decision-makers perceive competitively motivated roles or roles such as territory or ideology are more likely to exhibit hostile behavior.<sup>23</sup>

The literature on conceptions of national roles argues that different states have different dominant foreign policy preferences.<sup>24</sup> These preferences can either be tied back to the formative experiences of the early period of the state, or they are largely shaped by the cultural, political, and personal characteristics of the founding elites. In the case of Türkiye, with the establishment of the republic, the republican elite strongly maintained a Western-oriented, isolationist, and passive foreign policy stance, while the questioning of an alternative vision of Turkish foreign policy could only be realized after the 1970s. In this process, the



effects of many internal and external factors from the coups in Türkiye to the Cyprus vision of the first Ecevit government, from the effects of the Johnson Letter to the liberal initiatives under Özal's leadership, and the détente of the international system to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 can be seen.<sup>25</sup>

## İsmail Cem's Vision of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era

The security concerns that the Soviet Union created for Türkiye after Second World War formed the main line of Turkish foreign policy in the period known as the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 did not create a security concern for Türkiye as in the past with Soviet Russia, and the discourses of the 'Century of Türkiye' and "from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China" in Turkish foreign policy were featured in the literature. However, after the initial shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was understood that Türkiye's achievements, especially in Central Asia, were limited.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, some issues frozen by the Cold War in Türkiye's immediate vicinity turned into hot conflicts and even wars in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Moreover, the administrative weakness that emerged in Northern Iraq after the First Gulf War provided a flourishing habitat for the PKK terrorist organization in Syria. The PKK's attacks targeting Türkiye, which were rapidly increasing in their influence in Northern Iraq, have led to humanitarian, military, and economic losses, unlike Türkiye's NATO allies after the Cold War.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to these regional and global developments that directly concern Türkiye, Turkish foreign policy has also been highly influenced by domestic political developments. With the death of President Turgut Özal in April 1993, the stable period in domestic politics ended and was replaced by economic and political crises as well as an era of unstable governments. Due to the coalition governments that came to power between 1993 and 2003, there was a period of conquest in domestic and foreign policy.<sup>28</sup>

In this crisis period, PKK terrorism, the tension with Greece, the Cyprus problem, and the developments in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East, especially in Syria, exhausted Türkiye's energy in foreign policy. Likewise, Türkiye's inability to provide the stability it sought in the European Economic Community/European Union (EEC/EU) during this period worsened the process. According to Temel İskit, the struggle between the appointees and the elected officials that emerged during the periods of stable governments shifted in favor of the appointees after 1992. Also the coalition governments that were in power after 1992 had to follow the views and recommendations of the Foreign Ministry in foreign policy due to their weaknesses. Naming this period "years of stagnation and defense," İskit noted that very few noteworthy foreign policy steps were taken during this time.<sup>29</sup>

Another development that aggravated the atmosphere in Türkiye is the "February 28 postmodern coup." During the ANASOL-D and ANASOL-M (ANAP, DSP, MHP/Nationalist Movement Party) governments established after February 28, the political process did not change and uncertainty continued to a great extent. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was one of the few areas where stability was achieved after February 28. İsmail Cem, who served as a minister during the ANASOL-D and ANAYOL-M governments, ranks among the longest-serving foreign ministers of Türkiye. Although the foreign policy could not be immediately stabilized with Cem's ministry, the order began to be relatively established in 1999.<sup>30</sup>

İsmail Cem took important steps in foreign policy by developing a new perception and perspective that depended on the current domestic and foreign developments. While this situation was influenced by Cem's intellectual per-

sonality, the support of the president and the National Security Council (NSC) played a role in the acceptance of the foreign policy approach despite the chaos of the period.<sup>31</sup>

Cem, a serious critic of traditional foreign policy, emphasized that Türkiye needed to redefine itself to succeed in foreign policy. Criticizing the fact that the traditional foreign policy had not changed despite the change of ministers and governments, Cem emphasized that it was a mistake to ignore the country's rich past because it undermined the advantages provided by history and geography. According to Cem, traditional foreign policy turns its back on attributes Türkiye has accumulated over the centuries. Pointing out the flaws of this approach, which kept the country estranged from the Balkans, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Islamic world to benefit the West, Cem consistently emphasized the need to change the foreign policy deprived of these innate attributes during his time at the ministry (1997-2002).<sup>32</sup>

In his first press conference after becoming a minister, Cem spoke of expanding the ideological and conceptual framework of foreign policy. In line with this point, another concept to which Cem attached value was the addition of a Eurasian dimension.<sup>33</sup> Eurasia encompasses the European and Asian continents, which are even more connected to each other now under the influence of globalization and technology, and according to Cem, are factors that point to the economic and political reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Türkiye's history, cultural accumulation, and economic features have opened up opportunities in Eurasia for the country. Although Europe was still important in foreign policy during the period when Türkiye moved away from the EU with the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, İsmail Cem also brought the focus on Eurasia to the fore alongside the EU to avoid an "obsessive"<sup>34</sup> stance on Ankara's relations with the European bloc.

As part of his approach, Cem adopted "historical geography" as the theoretical framework of foreign policy based on the cultural, historical, and geographical codes of Türkiye instead of the traditional foreign policy perception that lacks these dimensions and has a fatal approach of "it or the other" with its analysis based on abstractions.<sup>35</sup> In this context, amid this new political structure repositioning, the Asia-Pacific,<sup>36</sup> Latin America,<sup>37</sup> and Africa<sup>38</sup> were also among the regions Cem attached importance to and opened up to in foreign policy.

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## Concerning education and culture issues, it was planned that African students would receive training in Türkiye, Turkish personnel would provide training in Africa, and African officers would be invited to Türkiye

In 1998, İsmail Cem introduced a new understanding of the national role in the form of the Action Plan for Opening to Africa, which brought a radical revision to the traditional foreign policy understanding. The implementation and execution of the Action Plan, which is examined in detail below, was made possible by the AK Party governments that came to power in 2002. In addition to the active participation of the AK Party governments in Middle

East issues, which led to heated debates regarding Ankara being a “regional leader,” opting for “an axis shift” and “neo-Ottomanist,” the country also paid special attention to Africa and Africa policy by ensuring the role prescription in line with the opening action plan.<sup>39</sup>

### The Action Plan for Opening to Africa

While the traditional perception of Türkiye arising from its domestic political structure distances its foreign policy from the East, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa<sup>40</sup> and the historical geography of the region, these geographies were included in the new vision of Turkish foreign policy by İsmail Cem.<sup>41</sup> During his time in the ministry, Cem decided to greatly expand Turkish ties with Africa, a continent whose traditional foreign policy did not attach enough importance.<sup>42</sup> Undoubtedly, Cem’s life experiences and the situations he encountered in his foreign trips due to his office had a great impact on these developments. For example, during Cem’s visit to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, he learned from the Sudanese president that there were nine Ottoman governors’ graves there and how the Turks affected Sudan, which left a deep impression on him. Reacting to this “ignorance, rootlessness,” he marked the Eastern and the Asian dimensions as among the priorities of foreign policy in the first days of his ministry in line with the redetermined direction of Türkiye’s international policies.<sup>43</sup>

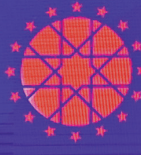
In the early days of his time at the ministry, in addition to his standard administrative duties, Cem was also interested in several diplomatic issues related to Africa.<sup>44</sup> In this regard, in the face of insufficient relations with the countries of continental Africa, the policy of opening up to Africa became a priority. In line with the new approach, a series of meetings was organized with the participation of relevant ambassadors, public and private sector representatives, and an Action Plan covering the measures to be taken for the development of Türkiye-Africa relations was prepared. The plan was put into effect in Novem-

ber 1998. Over 10 years, Türkiye's development of political, economic, trade, and cultural relations with African countries and the improvement of Türkiye's level of diplomatic representation in Africa were the main objectives addressed in the plan.<sup>45</sup>

The Action Plan was discussed under the headings of "General, Target, Representation Status, Measures, Delegation Visits, Visa Problems, Implementation and Coordination, and the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) Dimension." While the justification of the Africa opening policy under the "General" heading was explained in the context of the inadequacy of relations, the fact that no African country except Sudan took part diplomatically in Türkiye –after the closure of the Embassies of Ethiopia, Somalia, and Nigeria– was accepted as a parameter showing the low level of relations. To boost the insufficient ties, under the title of "Target," a plan was discussed for establishing an infrastructure and budget. This plan was formulated with a long-term timeline on the basis that it would not be immediately possible to extensively develop Türkiye-Africa relations. In addition, in this section, the steps to be taken in the short and long term regarding the developments of the process were included.<sup>46</sup>

In the short term –within two years– it aimed to secure support from African countries for Türkiye's candidacy for the UN Security Council. The final long-term goal is to develop economic, commercial, and cultural relations with Africa and to ensure that political relations are on a solid footing. In this context, under the heading of "Representation Status," an increase in the number of Turkish embassies in Africa, then numbering only 12, within 10 years was emphasized. The reopening of the closed embassies and the opening of embassies in Tanzania, Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire, and Zimbabwe, which are considered strategically important, were evaluated. Likewise, work was initiated to accredit the ambassadors working in Ankara to important African countries to strengthen contact and to open honorary consulates in countries where there is no representative office.<sup>47</sup>

The most comprehensive part of the Africa Action Plan is the "Measures." The issue of measures is discussed under the subheadings of "Administrative," "Political," "Economic," "Education and Culture," "Military," and "Promotion." While the administrative measures were mostly related to the technical issues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, general proposals were made under the title of "Political Measures" to contribute to the process. High-level invitations from African countries, the establishment of political consultation mechanisms, frequent invitations of ambassadors accredited to Türkiye to Ankara, increasing contact with African countries within the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), organizing mutual parliamentary visits, sending delegations, and humanitarian aid such as food/material/medicine were the main issues of the political measures.<sup>48</sup>



# TÜRKİYE - AFRICA MEDIA SUMMIT

About Us



Turkish  
Presidential  
Directorate of  
Communications  
organized the  
Türkiye-Africa  
Media Summit in  
İstanbul on May  
25-26, 2022.  
SERHAT ÇAĞDAŞ /  
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Under the heading of “Economic Measures,” the following plans were included: establishing a legal basis and infrastructure; proposing trade, economic, technical, and scientific cooperation agreements and making them operational; developing cooperation at the technical level; inviting African trade ministers to the İzmir International Fair; organizing technical training programs and study trips and sending experts from Türkiye; creating a special fund of \$10 million within the OIC to be managed by Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Başkanlığı*, TİKA); paying the promised \$50 million contribution to the African Development Bank; conducting business visits; and establishing councils and joint chambers of commerce. Likewise, several proposals such as encouraging large Turkish companies to invest in Africa, participating in fairs organized in Africa, and developing air-sea transportation were also listed.<sup>49</sup>

In the fields of education and culture, the signing of cultural agreements, increasing the number of scholarships given to African students, maintaining contact with scholarship students after graduation, providing information about scholarship holders to embassies, and taking initiatives to ensure that more students receive education in Türkiye with the scholarships of the Islamic Development Bank were included. Concerning education and culture issues, it was planned that African students would receive training in Türkiye, Turkish personnel would provide training in Africa, and African officers would be invited to Türkiye. Regarding “Promotion,” which is the last title of the measures, in addition to all the things to be done, emphasis was placed

on the participation of Africans in the festivals in Türkiye, inviting speakers from Africa to foreign policy meetings in Türkiye and inviting academics. In addition, to increase the interest of the Turkish public opinion regarding Africa, the Foreign Policy Institute organized a symposium on Africa, and the Institute of African Studies was established in a Turkish university.<sup>50</sup>

The topic discussed after the measures was “Delegation Visits.” For the first time, “goodwill delegations” were sent to Africa in the 1960s to provide support in foreign policy due to the Cyprus crisis, but due to the limited aims of the delegations and the conjuncture, the desired contribution to bilateral relations could not be achieved.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, in line with the benefits provided by the contacts, the Action Plan prepared in 1998 included delegation visits again. The plan aimed to send delegations to Africa starting in the autumn and to investigate cooperation opportunities, to determine technical assistance opportunities for these countries, to provide information on Türkiye’s candidacy for the UN Security Council, the Cyprus issue, and other issues related to Turkish foreign policy. While determining the priority given to countries with economic and political weight, it was deemed appropriate to select four entry points: West Africa (two), East Africa, and South Africa. It was also discussed that the delegations contacted various African organizations with headquarters in Cairo, Abidjan, and Addis Ababa. While the visits are planned to be made primarily to the countries where Türkiye’s embassies and honorary consulates are located, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was recommended that representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Undersecretaries of Foreign Trade, TİKA, and the Foreign Economic Relations Board (*Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu*, DEİK) should take part in the delegations. West Africa, called the 1<sup>st</sup> group, includes Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> group; called Sahel consisted of Niger, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Gambia, and Mauritania. The Southwest Africa group is the 3<sup>rd</sup> group, consisting of Gabon, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while the 4<sup>th</sup> group representing East Africa consists of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Egypt, and Sudan.<sup>52</sup>

Another step that needs to be taken for the development of relations has been the demand for visa facilitation for Africans under the title of “Visa Problem.” The Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Security has been included in the process to take drastic measures to prevent trade from being adversely

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## Although the issue of opening to Africa is a long-term project, the fact that relations were almost non-existent made diplomatic, economic, cultural, and political successes possible in a short time

affected. Some practical measures were also requested from the ambassadors. Under the heading of “Implementation and Coordination,” the things to be done for the success of the plan were discussed. First of all, in the Action Plan, in which it is underlined that success depends on being sustainable, the prerequisite for this was determined as political support. If con-

tinuity is ensured, it was foreseen that concrete results could be obtained in the long term, if not in the short term. In practice, cooperation with countries such as Egypt, South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, which are influential in Continental Africa, through existing business councils, has been put on the agenda. In addition, cooperation with Oman and the U.S., which also influence the region, was also considered. It was decided to establish a coordination committee under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure coordination between all relevant ministries and organizations for the implementation of the Action Plan prepared in the light of the joint work of the private sector, diplomacy, and public representatives.<sup>53</sup>

The most striking section of the Africa Action Plan is the “TRNC Dimension,” which is not directly related to Türkiye-Africa relations. It is emphasized in the plan that the opening to Africa has a Cyprus dimension and that it is intended to contribute to Türkiye’s Cyprus policy.<sup>54</sup> Türkiye first launched an initiative for African countries to receive support on the Cyprus issue after the Johnson Letter Crisis in 1964. Although it was not long-term, delegations were sent to the newly independent African countries to explain Türkiye’s Cyprus thesis. In this direction, the Cyprus issue was included in the Africa Opening in 1998 as in 1964.<sup>55</sup> The “confederation” thesis, which was announced by TRNC President Rauf Denктаş in August 1998 and accepted as an official policy, was one of the issues that Türkiye hoped to receive support for in its Africa expansion. As a first step in this direction, it was planned that the representatives of African countries working at the UN in New York and Geneva would be invited to Türkiye within a program and if they wish, would visit the TRNC. In addition to Türkiye’s Africa initiative on Cyprus, the TRNC has also focused on similar initiatives.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

Türkiye was one of the countries that did not actively participate in Second World War but was greatly affected by the consequences of the war. Türkiye’s national security crisis against the Soviet Union in 1945 once again added

historical traumas to the agenda of Turkish foreign policy. While Türkiye evaluated the U.S. as an important actor in creating a balance in foreign policy against the Soviet Union in this process, after NATO membership, Türkiye-West relations became the priority of foreign policy. On the other hand, Türkiye's disappointment with the U.S. during the Johnson Letter crisis in 1964 necessitated addressing Ankara's one-sided foreign policy. This process necessitated an opening policy toward countries with a colonial past, such as those in Africa that had just gained independence from Western countries. However, the Cold War and the domestic political events that developed in connection with it left Türkiye's first African initiative in flux.

After the end of the Cold War, which had a very important impact on Türkiye, the country's foreign policy shifted due to the changing paradigm. In the face of factors such as Türkiye's inability to adapt to changing parameters, the relative loss of the country's former importance, the increasing problem of terrorism, the emergence of hot conflict areas in its immediate geography, and the end of the successful leader period, the country experienced a lost period in domestic politics that can be considered as a period of interregnum. Türkiye's priorities had focused on the economy and terrorism and prevented the pursuit of an effective approach to foreign policy. Likewise, due to the changing paradigm after the Cold War, the failure of Türkiye's EU membership initiative, on which it had pinned its hopes in terms of foreign and domestic policy, has led to more intrinsic approaches.

The most important exception to this decade of uniformity in terms of foreign policy is the fact that İsmail Cem, who was supported by both the NSC and the president of the republic and has an important leadership profile, was the minister of foreign affairs. Cem, an important intellectual and political figure in Türkiye, stabilized foreign policy over five years by maintaining his position as foreign minister despite coalition governments. İsmail Cem's second important contribution to foreign policy was to criticize the traditional one-sided Western aspect of Turkish foreign policy at the intellectual level and to take steps to make it possible for Türkiye to pursue a multidimensional policy. Latin America as well as the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions, which attracted Türkiye's attention for the first time after the Johnson crisis, were the new geographies for foreign policy during Cem's time at the ministry. According to the foreign policy theory formulated by İsmail Cem based on "historical geography," Continental Africa, where Türkiye has cultural, historical, and geographical ties, has been accepted as one of the priority areas for strengthening ties.

The Action Plan for Opening to Africa, which has economic and political legs and was adopted in November 1998, was implemented with the cooperation of state institutions and the private sector to improve the relations that Türkiye sees as inadequate with Africa in the short and long term. The involvement of

the private sector in the process also shows that İsmail Cem's leadership profile successfully analyzes the changing foreign policy actors in the globalizing world. Although the Africa Opening has an economic purpose, the priority for Turkish foreign policy has been the strengthening of political relations. The economy has been evaluated as a tool and facilitating factor in this process. All these developments are manifestations of Cem's adoption of a new understanding of the role of African politics.

Although the issue of opening to Africa is a long-term project, the fact that relations were almost non-existent made diplomatic, economic, cultural, and political successes possible in a short time. On the other hand, the success of the Africa opening has contributed to Ankara's long-term goals and its continuity shows that the plan has been successfully executed. The interference of the coalition governments against İsmail Cem's stable ministry threatened the success of the Africa initiative. However, the continuation of the work initiated in Africa during the AK Party governments has made it possible to carry out the desired developments. The multidimensional policy, which was accepted as a foreign policy principle during the AK Party governments, maintained Türkiye's political stability in these geographies by providing continuity for Türkiye's African, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America-Caribbean relations apart from the West. ■

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