

***South Africa and Turkey in an era of Globalization:  
Constructing a Relationship, Crafting a Partnership***

***[Please treat it as a rough draft]***

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**Abstract**

Geographically South Africa is located at the foot of the African continent whilst Turkey is at the nexus of two key continents, namely Europe and Asia. Both nation states have developed into significant players in the international arena and both have been recognized as ‘middle powers’ that have succeeded to make important inputs to global affairs. Even though the respective countries’ foreign policies differ from one another because of, inter alia, the values that they espouse, the cultural practices that they advocate, and socio-political circumstances within which they find themselves, they have responded in this period of globalization to international matters in a fairly positive and constructive manner.

Considering their encouraging roles as ‘middle powers’, this paper wishes to reflect upon the relationship that they have constructed over the past two decades and assess the nature of the partnership that they have crafted during the last few years. The paper, however, examines the ties that exist between these two nation-states within a broader historical framework and within a wider International Relations context. With this in mind, the paper begins by briefly referring to the historical connections between South Africa and Turkey that was forged at the religio-cultural level through diplomatic channels more than a century ago, and ends by evaluating their relations during the contemporary period (circa 1991-2011)

**Key words:** South Africa, Turkey, International Relations, Identity, Middle Powers, Globalization

## **0. Introduction**

When we compare South Africa and Turkey, it is quite clear that both nation-states underwent socio-political and economic changes and encountered diverse internal and external challenges throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the time the British colonialists, who tried to maintain 'balance-of-power' (Roskin & Berry 1999) but whose powers were on a gradual decline, 'released' South Africa to form a Union in 1910 the Ottoman Empire was still actively exercising its rights over its lands. But since the Ottoman Empire Sultan threw his weight behind the German empire when World War I broke out, the geopolitical landscape changed soon thereafter. Instead of maintaining its control over the areas that were under it, the Sultan lost these to the British and its allies and this resulted in the Ottoman Empire break-up and the Sultan losing his powers. The outcome of this resulted in Kemal Ataturk establishing the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

From that date Turkey pursued its nationalist ideals with a secular identity under the leadership of Ataturk. During that period the Union of South Africa was under the political leadership of General Jan Smuts who continued to be loyal to the British crown and who persisted in consciously discriminating against the majority of South Africa's (non-White) peoples. As the Smuts regime weakened it eventually lost its political power by 1948 to the Afrikaner nationalists who espoused a peculiar Afrikaner identity; the developments in South Africa took place at the same time when the United Nations (UN) Declaration of Human Rights was declared and endorsed. Since the Afrikaner nationalists established the notorious apartheid state, they introduced through legal structures a set of laws that further disadvantaged the majority of South Africa's peoples. It should, however, be stated that between 1910 and 1948 - and even prior to this period - these disadvantaged communities did not enjoy any equal opportunity or treatment. The Afrikaner White government continued to oppress and suppress the rights of the majority and they did so until 1994 when South Africa was transformed into a democratic state. So, whilst Afrikaner nationalism was stressed at the expense of (South) African nationalism, the Ataturk government through the process of nation-building laid much emphasis on Turkish nationalism and Turkish identity; as a consequence the nation-building exercise Turkey managed to develop into a vibrant and resilient secular nation-state despite some of its internal and external challenges.

The different historical trajectories of both states during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrate that South Africa and Turkey - as bona fide nation-states in the world-system - had to deal with a variety of issues – internally and externally - along the way. Though this paper does not intend to embark on a comparative study of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it sets itself the task to undertake a cursory examination of the relationship that has been constructed over the past two decades (circa 1991-2011). As far as we can detect only a few published papers have discussed South Africa's relationship with Turkey. Perhaps a few words should be said about the academia's response to East European and Asian studies. One the whole, the academia, despite the democratic transformation that

had taken place thus far, has not been proactive in looking at other areas and nor has it changed its Eurocentric orientation; consequently, the theoretical studies have remained under the influence of what has thus far transpired in the North. Grounded in this orientation meant that there has been difficulty in drifting to a non-Eurocentric posture and it is for this reason that very few academics have shifted their sights to Turkey and other development states as possible areas of focus. Since scholarship has been wanting in these sectors, let us list a few that tried to fill the glaring gaps but still did not do so satisfactorily.

In South African scholarship, the following chapters and articles offered overviews of South Africa's relations with Middle Eastern countries but did not include Turkey in their surveys: Y. Dadoo. 1997. 'Relations with the Middle East and the Arabs.' In *Change and South African External Relations*' (eds. W. Carlsnaes & M. Muller). Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing. Ch. 10 pp.174-180; M. Haron. 1997. 'South African-Middle Eastern Relations.' In *Digest for Middle Eastern Studies* [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee]. 6(4):1-24, Fall; F. Kornegay. 1999. 'The Middle East and South Africa: April 1998-April 1999.' In *South African Yearbook of International Affairs 1999/2000*. Johannesburg: SAIA. Section Two pp. 163-172; and I. Jhazbhay. 2004. 'South Africa and the Middle East: A Test of Sure-Footed Maturity and Do-Able Morality?' In *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1994-2004: Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future* (ed. E. Sidiropoulos). Johannesburg: SAIA. Section Four pp. 280-296. The only book that included an essay on the links between these two states is the *South African Yearbook of International Affairs* of 1999; in this edited compilation G. Mills had a pedestrian chapter titled 'Turkish-South African Relations' in the second section on bi-lateral relations. By 2005 after T. Wheeler served as the South African ambassador to Turkey did we get a more extensive treatment of the nature of the connections between the two nation-states. Wheeler handed in a *Report* to the South African Institute of International Affairs in 2005 in which he covered the political and commercial ties that were forged between South Africa and Turkey. And in 2011 Wheeler published a follow-up text titled 'Ankara to Africa' with special focus on South Africa.

The question that we now encounter is: what about Turkish scholars? Have they made a concerted effort in this regard? The answer to these two questions is in the affirmative and in the negative. It seems that since the Ottoman Empire was involved in African affairs when it ruled the northern part of the continent and when it had exchanges with the Zanzibari sultanate, a few scholars such as Ahmet Kavas researched the area on wrote on the subject. However, there was no notable scholar who extensively reflected on the Istanbul and Cape connection. This only happened towards the end of the 1990s when Turkish students came to know about the Abu Bakr Effendi story. It was this crop of students who seriously researched this area and demonstrated the links between the Ottoman Empire/Turkey and South Africa. Here we shall not critically comment on two research projects that captured this episode of the religio-cultural and diplomatic history; they were: S. Argun's *The Life and Contribution of the Osmanli scholar, Abu Bakr Effendi: Towards Islamic Thought and Culture in South Africa* unpublished MA thesis that was handed in at Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg) during 2000 and Serhat Orakçi's *A Historical Analysis of the Emerging Links Between the Ottoman Empire and South Africa between 1861-1923* MA thesis that was finalized at the University of Johannesburg in 2007 and that was published in 2011 in Cambridge. Two other related texts, which

appeared at the same time, were M. Sahin's 'Formation of Cape Colonial Community and the Ottoman Turkish Existence in South Africa' which appeared as a journal article in the *Pakistan Journal of Social Science* 3(9): 1129–37, 2006 and Ahmet Uçar's *Unforgotten Legacy: Ottomans in South Africa* that was published in Ensenlar by ÇAMLICA during 2007.

It might perhaps be appropriate to insert, at least, three other significant texts that focused on the relationship; they are Maximillien Kollisch's 1867 booklet which looked at *The Musselman Population at the Cape of Good Hope* and which interestingly printed by the Levant Herald Office in Constantinople); Ali A. Falifil's 1994 Arabic text titled *The Ottoman Empire and the Muslims in South Africa: Documentary Studies for the Period 1856 until 1878* (Cairo: Centre of Arabic Civilization. African Studies Series No. 4. pp.i-iii and 1-70), and Martin Van Bruinessen's 2000 chapter titled "A Nineteenth-century Kurdish scholar in South Africa" which appeared in an edited text, namely *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society. Collected Articles* (Istanbul: The Isis Press). With this selected list of literature that concentrated on the theme, we can now get to the objective of this essay.

Its purpose is therefore twofold; the first is to complement and re-asses the relationship and secondly it is to specifically evaluate the socio-cultural, commercial and political relationship as it evolved in the post-Cold War period; a period that coincides with the era of globalization. Before we reflect upon this, we briefly return to the historical developments to record those events that somehow set the scene for the existing political, commercial and socio-cultural connections at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **1. Historical Events: Between Istanbul and the Cape**

Towards the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing Muslim community that resided at the foot of the African continent in the Cape Peninsula area generally known as the Cape of Good Hope. This Muslim community like many other religious minority communities was not homogenous in their outlook and interpretation of their primary religious sources and nor did they agree on matters such as leadership. As a result of this, the community faced internal conflict for which there seemed to have been no concrete solution in sight despite efforts that were made to find a suitable religious leader and to fuse the internal theological tensions. Since there was no one that was considered to be in the position to take up the post as chief Imam at the Cape and more particularly at the Palm Tree mosque (located in the heart of the expanding port-city), Mr. de Roubaix – a government official - was concerned with what was taking place among the Cape Muslims and decided to approach the British colonial authorities for assistance; the British authorities forwarded a special request to the London based Ottoman Empire diplomatic representatives. The authorized appeal eventually saw the selection of Shaykh Abu Bakr Effendi (d. 1886) who trekked to the Cape of Good Hope and landed there in 1862 (Van Selms 1968; Davids 1980; Effendi 1991; van Bruinessen 2000; Wheeler 2005). Apart from this diplomatic intervention the Ottoman and British empires had consular relations from the 1860s until the outbreak of World War I when the Ottoman Turks chose to side with the German Empire instead of the British Empire (cf. Şahin 2006; Orakçı 2007).

The religio-cultural ties that were forged through diplomatic and political channels during the period of British colonial rule thus contributed to the evolution of a fascinating history at the Cape. Although it is not the intention to repeat the historical records in detail and nor to offer a critical assessment of Abu Bakr Effendi's contribution, we want to stress two important outcomes that shaped the intra-Muslim relationship at the Cape in the decades that followed. The first was that though Shaykh Effendi possessed in-depth knowledge of the different schools of Muslim jurisprudence and though he was regarded the most qualified person to take up the chief imamate post at the Cape, some viewed him with suspicion because he leaned towards the Hanafi school instead of giving emphasis to the Shafi'i school to which most – if not all - of the Cape Muslims belonged. But despite the initial negative outcomes, it exposed the majority of Shafi'i adherents to Hanafi thought and helped them to have a better understanding of a school about which many of them possessed little or no knowledge up until then.

The second is that Shaykh Effendi prepared a detailed theological-jurisprudential text titled *Bayan ud-Din* – an Istanbul printed publication that was written in Afrikaans but one that employed the Arabic script. Since its 'discovery' by Adrianus van Selms (1951) and later endorsed by Achmat Davids (1991/2011), this and other related manuscripts were called 'Arabic-Afrikaans'. With this text the Shaykh made an unconscious and a substantial contribution on two levels; on the one level, he left behind a religious text that was somewhat unrivalled and that could not easily be replaced by the succeeding shaykhs with the exception of Shaykh Ismail Ganief's (d. 1958) invaluable extensive inputs; and on the other, this particular Arabic-Afrikaans text, which also stimulated other religious leaders to prepare manuscripts on a variety of theological themes, made a considerable input to the emerging field of Afrikaans linguistics. See for example the comparative study undertaken by N. Allie titled *The Impact of Bayan-uddin, the al-Riyad al-Badi'ah and the al-Hadramiyah on the Cape Muslim Community* that was completed as a BA Honours thesis at Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg) at the end of 1997. In the South African linguistic tradition, *Bayan-uddin* along with the other mss created a unique genre within the discipline of linguistics; an issue that was only given full recognition at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Apart from Arabic-Afrikaans texts being perceived as a critical contribution to the South African linguistic tradition, there was another issue that occupied the minds of the South African Muslims; this was the question of the Ottoman Khaliphate. As indicated earlier, the non-White communities - of which the Muslims were an integral part - were disenfranchised and oppressed throughout the colonial and post-colonial eras. These negative socio-political conditions did not stop them from demonstrating their interest in the affairs that were unfolding elsewhere. In fact, the Cape Muslims in particular and the South African Muslim leadership in general showed a keen interest in the developments that were taking place in the Muslim heartlands. Now since the abolishment of the Khaliphate captured the attention of the Muslim world, the Cape Muslims – in spite of their small numbers – also added their voices against the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and eradication of the Khaliphate by Kemal Ataturk in 1923. For the Cape Muslim community as well as other minority/majority Muslim communities in other parts of the world, the elimination of this central symbol was a major concern (cf. *Moslem Outlook* 1925-1927). At the Cape and in Durban for example, Muslims openly protested soon

after the Khaliphate was brought to an end and during the time when the Ataturk government decided to bring about changes such as the removal of the iconic headgear (which the community – as a matter of information – adopted at the Cape) and the replacement of the Arabic script with the Roman script. In their view the Khaliphate was a mark of religio-political unity that should have been kept intact and one that had a psychological effect upon the Muslim psyche in and outside the Muslim heartlands and they considered the Muslim dress codes and Arabic script as part of their religious identity (Wheeler 2005). Since there were no more diplomatic relations between the Union of South Africa and the Republic of Turkey from 1922 onwards, the public protestations and outbursts of South Africa's Muslims had no effect on what was taking place in the Republic of Turkey; in fact, this emerging nation-state went on to carve out within the international world-system its unique Turkish identity.

The historical narratives of Abu Bakr Effendi and the Khaliphate are two interesting issues that specialists in International Relation (IR) cannot afford to ignore since they formed part of what Beate Jahn (2000) termed 'the cultural construction of International Relation' (also cf. Hudson 1997). So when we evaluate South Africa's historical relationship with Turkey, we need to take into account the religio-cultural dimension that exists within the world-systems; a concept popularized by Wallerstein (1974; 1980; 1989). In fact, contemporary critical scholarship acknowledged that IR specialists and foreign policy makers as well as diplomats must take cognizance of the views of non-state actors in the construction of IR (Josselin & Wallace 2000). In the light of these observations, foreign policy makers should therefore take into account the key interventions of non-state actors and admit that their inputs have a crucial place in the IR agenda. Since we shall briefly return to the position of non-state actors in the final section of this paper, we shall now turn our attention to the theoretical frame before evaluating the relationship between South Africa and Turkey during the past two decades.

## **2. Identity, Middle Powers and Globalization in IR: A Theoretical Frame**

International Relations as an academic discipline emerged as a reaction to the shocking and horrible outcomes during the First World War and as a consequence this discipline was given full recognition by the University of Wales in 1919 about five years before the Ottoman Khaliphate finally came to a halt (Burchill 2001). And it was from that time onwards that international politics and global conflict were debated and formally recognized as new areas of academic inquiry. Since diplomacy was not the answer to reach a peaceful settlement, the up-and-coming scholars posed numerous IR related questions such as: What were the real causes of WWI? Why so much depression in the aftermath of WWI? And what did WWI really achieve in the end? The outcome of these and other related questions led to the assessment of an array of theories such as 'realism', 'liberalism' and 'constructivism' (Waltz 1998), and the examination of a variety of variables such as 'identity' and 'globalization'. For the purpose of this paper, we are only interested in the question of 'identity', the issue of 'middle powers', and the process of 'globalization.'

### **2.1 Identity**

'Identity' as encountered in the social science literature - of which IR forms an integral part - is a fluid and somewhat complex term or concept (Woodward 1997). It is noted that when assessing identity

in either South Africa or Turkey national identities they are viewed as contested and conflicting. In the old South Africa, for example, many of the oppressed people rejected being labeled 'South African' but this radically changed in the new democratic dispensation; herein they expressed pride in being called 'South African' and their general response seems to be in sync with the spirit of multi-culturalism; a form of identity that was and continues to be supported by globalization. Related to this, Hale (2010) advocated the notion that if a similar approach is adopted by Turkey towards the Kurds - many of whom are located in Turkey's Southeastern province – then they might by-pass the mono-ethnic nationalism, which is a current feature, and they would be in a position of replacing it with a form of multi-cultural identity; an identity that is more inclusive. Since the issue of identity - for different reasons - remains debatable and contentious in both South Africa and Turkey, it is matter that has to be addressed in greater depth with the hope of reaching an amicable internal solution.

## 2.2. Middle Powers

In any case, the identity that both South Africa and Turkey espouse also form part of the Middle Power features; in other words, as Middle Powers in the world-system, they cannot ignore the fact that their South Africanness or Turkishness play a significant role in how they construct their internal identity and how they behave towards others in the international arena. Let us quickly explain what is meant by the mentioned term and summarily show how South Africa and Turkey fits into this IR category. Hamill & Lee (2001) made reference to Cooper, Higgott & Nossal's *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver 1993) who listed a few behavioural criteria; they posited the view that 'to be included in the category of middle powers, countries have to act as middle powers.' The common strand that connects the three forms, namely (a) catalysts, (b) facilitators, and (c) managers, is the diplomatic skill that they employ; these they use in the service of foreign policy initiatives, building coalitions, establish formal institutions, and work towards international peace and stability.

That said, a middle power is, in effect, actively involved in international activities to secure peace, promote security, ensure global responsibility, resolve conflicts, bring an end to human rights abuses, and establish democracy. Lesage & Kacar (1910) quoted Koehane (1997) who argued that a middle power can be defined as "a state whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively, but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution." Schoeman (2000), who distinguished between middle powers and emerging middle powers, indicated that these groups of states, namely Brazil, Turkey, and India, may be seen as dominant regional powers that play different roles in the international system. Lesage & Kacar (1910) demonstrated tangibly how Turkey's profile in G20 placed it among the Middle Power brokers. They, for example, basically carry out the task of peace-maker in the region or try and broker peace in other parts of the world where the super powers have failed. For example, South Africa was requested to intervene and act as peace broker in Haiti, Kosovo, Palestine and East Timor and its Truth and Reconciliation Commission was adapted and exported to Liberia, Rwanda, and many other countries (Haron 2007). Turkey as a member of NATO has been involved in peace-keeping activities in Afghanistan and Somalia respectively. Lesage and Kacar (2010) further intimated that Turkey is a typical middle power that shares several traits. Based on A. Cooper's typology they pointed out "that Turkey is currently characterized by 1) a diffuse approach

instead of targeting a few concrete niches, 2) an occasionally “heroic” style, 3) a basically regional focus, albeit with a growing global scope, and 4) a mix of an accommodative and combative attitude”.

### 2.3 Globalization

Taking into account South Africa and Turkey’s general features (e.g. race, ethnicity and language) and specific conditions (e.g. political and economic) as well as their respective roles on the international scene as peace-keepers, they are viewed in the South as significant nation-states that are politically and judicially independent and above-all ‘sovereign’. The nation-state’s identity is considered by its political leaders – and here we paraphrase Acharya (2001) – as an attempt to ‘imagine’, delineate, and organize the nation’s socio-economic, political and strategic space within the world-system. Doing this essentially means carving out the nation-state’s unique identity amidst a rapidly changing region such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) or the European Union (EU); a region in which the sovereignty or political independence of the nation-state has occasionally been undermined and at times been seriously questioned. In addition during this post-Cold War era, both South Africa and Turkey as *bona fide* middle power nation-states in the world-system has continuously been challenged by the unstoppable surge and penetration of globalization. Let us quickly discuss what is understood by ‘middle powers’ before reflecting upon ‘globalization.’

‘Globalization’, which is a process ‘compelled by contradictory tendencies’ (Adar & Ujulu 2002; Keet 2004), has affected each and every nation-state and is one that has impacted upon the world system to such an extent that each of them has been coerced into being compliant with the new international arrangements that have been dictated by the advancement and diffusion of technology on the one hand and a globalized economy on the other. Whilst ‘globalization’ may simply be described as one that denotes the integration of an assortment of functions and diverse entities and a process that has been commended for the introduction of new technologies, opening up of economic markets and the promotion of multi-culturalism, it has also brought along with it an array of uneven development that has been witnessed in Africa and Asia. For example, the European Union has tried to twist the hands of SADC to comply with EU economic rules and regulations and in the case of Turkey placed many stumbling blocks in Turkey’s path before it can be accepted as an EU member; what all of these efforts reflect is that since the EU is a strong economic power, it dictates and forces weaker economic groups such as SADC to comply to its rules and not vice versa.

Let us not further expand on these issues here but briefly make the point that even though we might not have satisfactorily unpacked the three IR variables, they do assist us in examining the relationship that has been forged between South Africa and Turkey over the past two decades. In fact, the bond that has been established between South Africa and Turkey is a significant one and it is one that brings their respective socio-political and cultural identities to the fore during this era of globalization. So let us now turn to these two nation-states and evaluate the nature of the relationship.

### **3. South Africa-Turkey Relations: Tip-toeing into the future**

Wheeler (2005) informed us about the nature of the ties that was sustained between South Africa and Turkey from 1860 until 1922 - the year before the Ottoman Empire was replaced by the

Republic of Turkey. The relationship then was very different from the relationship at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At that time the connections were not as deep as it is at present and when the Republic of Turkey was borne, the Union of South Africa was not totally independent as may have been expected and it was effectively still dependent upon the British Crown's decisions. Turkey, however, enjoyed its sovereignty since then and continued to exercise its power by observing international relations standards and adopting international relations policies that worked in its interest; it essentially tailored for itself a secular identity instead of maintaining a religious one.

When moving away from that period and closer to the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is noted that Turkey's position within the geo-strategic sphere shifted and its secular identity has gradually eroded to give way to a religious one. According to Wheeler's informative report, the changes were already visible after the 1980 military coup and when Turgut Özal succeeded in coming to power in 1983. From that time onwards Özal "changed the nature of the Turkish economy from the statist model introduced in 1922 by Ataturk into a modern, entrepreneurial model, with a start being made on privatising the many state enterprises that had been used to launch the Turkish economy into the modern world." Özal, in Wheeler's view, was a sharp economic technocrat and pragmatist who gave Turkey a face-lift.

It was during this period of socio-political change in Turkey that attracted the attention of the South African apartheid regime. This regime like the Zionist state of Israel was on the look-out for possible trade partners and so the potential in striking a diplomatic deal with Turkey in the midst of the sanctions that had been imposed upon it by the UN and most other nation-states was considered a potentially risky but a good one. As expected, the South African government which brought about some internal cosmetic changes by 1983 made overtures to the Özal government as a potential trading partner. Turkey did not respond to these and it is assumed that the Turkish government was aware of South Africa's pariah status (Wheeler 2005).

Turkey seemed, however, to have turned a blind eye when it allowed apartheid South Africa to open an Istanbul office in 1989. According Wheeler's (2005) sources, Turkey unofficially gave Mr. D.T. de Wet, an officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) along with an officer of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), permission to operate as managing director of the African Trade Centre from the premises of a private Turkish company. Though this arrangement was not an agreeable and acceptable one, it did lay the foundations for what was to take place during the 1990s. In fact, the person who succeeded de Wet was eventually appointed the first consulate-general in Istanbul.

### **3.1 Making Contact, Finding Themselves: 1991-1998**

These pre-1994 contacts signaled the apartheid regime's willingness to strike ties with whomsoever it could and it also reflected a sense of desperation. For some reason, the apartheid regime did not realize that it was hampered by its own internal policies and as a result was unable to create diplomatic links with countries in the Muslim heartlands. The apartheid regime sensed that its rule was slowly grinding to a halt and as a consequence it tried its utmost to secure political and commercial connections soon after Nelson Mandela was released from prison in February 1990 and particularly the

years before the ANC was voted into power. A point that should not be overlooked when reflecting upon the apartheid Afrikaner regime's international relations position was that it was heavily Eurocentric and thus viewed its relationship with countries such as Turkey from the South through the lenses of the North. So whatever efforts it made to create commercial ties was done with European oriented international relations agenda in mind (Spence 1990); it is because of this IR stance that Kornegay & Landsberg (2000) discussed 'overcoming White foreign affairs domination in South Africa'.

The apartheid regimes which tried to exercise its White domination and these early diplomatic attempts showed that its political overtures, during the early years of the post-Cold War period, were somewhat premature. In fact, the ties that were initiated and forged with Turkey started off on the wrong footing and this resulted in the formation of a shaky rather than a sound relationship. When diplomatic relations were established, it was done at a consular level during 1991 (Mills 1999; Wheeler 2005). There were, as a matter of fact, three issues that affected and influenced this somewhat cold diplomatic relationship. Before we critically assess these, we consciously do so by not forgetting that between 1991 and 1994 South Africa was going through a major political transition; the Nationalist Party was forced to negotiate with the ANC that was coerced to become a political party instead of remaining a liberation movement. The CODESA talks, to some extent, made it difficult for any nation-state to establish firm political ties with the apartheid regime; a regime that they knew was on its way out. It may therefore be argued that any country and in this instance Turkey had to be wary of these issues and should not have expected nor assumed that its ties with South Africa during uncertain times would yield beneficial political and commercial results. And when the new democratic government under Mandela came into power at the end of April 1994, the DFA under Alfred Nzo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was finding its way into an arena that needed sophistication and creativity since it was dealing with external affairs. Unfortunately, uncertainties of which direction to take South Africa existed within the DFA and some of the old-guard continued to influence the decision-making processes in foreign policy; this was indeed an internal problem that affected various levels and negatively influenced the DFA's activities. Broderick, Burford & Freer (2001) highlighted in their edited volume that democratic South Africa under Mandela faced regional dilemmas on the one hand and on the other it encountered international predicaments; the issues in Turkey are clear examples of these.

Assessing the relationship between these two developing nation-states in the South, one finds that since the resumed diplomatic contacts took place on 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1991 with the exchange of consuls-general the relationship was not a stable one; it was somewhat shaky. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October the two countries upgraded their relationship to ambassadorial status. General C. Jacobs, who was the Consul-General after having served as the Director of the earlier mentioned company, was appointed the ambassador; the same applied to Sami Onaran who was the Consul-General of Turkey up until then. In 1993 apartheid South Africa's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Renier Schoeman, opened the chancery of the South African embassy in Ankara. After the April 1994 democratic elections in South Africa Mandela appointed his cabinet and Alfred Nzo saw to the appointment of new consuls-general and ambassadors wherever South Africa had diplomatic contacts. South Africa realized that its Department's representation was overstretched and consequently cut-down the number of staff members and also withdrew its representation in some of the most important cities; Istanbul was

among those that were affected. Wheeler questioned the decision of the South African government for having done this at a time that South Africa needed to strengthen its connections with countries that were located in important regions. In any case, the DFA of South Africa looked at these issues through different lenses and thus made decisions that appeared short-sighted and unwise at the time. Perhaps it should be added that South Africa also did not have any specialists who had a deep knowledge of Turkey and the Caucus region and it relied much upon outside specialists.

Taking into account the absence of specialists who did not know Turkey's geo-political position, its religio-cultural identity, its socio-economic conditions and host of other related aspects, South Africa entered into a relationship that was meant to be problematic. One of the issues that narrated to Wheeler by the former Turkish Prime Minister, namely Suleyman Demirel, was conferring the Ataturk Peace Prize on Nelson Mandela. According to the Wheeler report Demirel and Mandela met at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, and it was after this brief meeting that it struck the former PM to confer the mentioned prize upon Mandela after the latter made some flattering remarks about Kemal Ataturk. When the decision was made by the Demirel government to confer the prize, Mandela was the President of the ANC that had some form of contact with the Kurdish Workers Party. As a result of this association, it made it difficult for Mandela to agree to have the prize conferred and what seems to have made it more problematic was by the time Mandela was elected president of a democratic South Africa, the information was not properly communicated to him by the person/persons who were tasked to do so; in essence, there was a basic miscommunication that led to an inevitable misunderstanding.

At the heart of this confusion was how the Kurdish issue – the second of the three matters - was understood and interpreted in South African DFA circles; it may be argued that the South African democratic government had no clear policy on these issues and it was not in a position at that point in time to deal with it in a mature and wise way. In fact, the ANC dominated government whose leanings were towards those who supported their ideas and activities during the time it was recognized as a liberation movement still dictated its foreign policies and it is because of this political position that Mandela refused it. The issue did not, of course, die a natural death and was constantly raised by the Turkish representative in Pretoria. This was even taken up with Aziz Pahad, the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, when he visited Ankara in 2000 as well as Deputy President Jacob Zuma in 2003. Since this issue was never resolved partly because of Mandela's retirement from office and politics, the matter was forced to be shunned to the historical archives. Lamentably, this matter remained and will continue to be - to some extent - a painful point in Turkish-South African relations.

The third issue that was critical between Turkey and South Africa was the arms deal that was made between the two countries before 1994. When the new democratic government came to power, the Minister of Defence, Joe Modise decided to stop the shipment of arms that was destined for Turkey. This decision angered the Turkey's military whose total agreement, which was less than \$100 million, was immediately scuttled and put on ice; this was further problematized by the added decision of the National Convention Arms Control committee that was responsible for overseeing this sector to place an embargo upon Turkey. The decisions, that seemed to have influenced the committee and perhaps the Minister of Defence, were (a) the observance of human rights and (b) the balance of power in the

region. Turkey was among the few countries in the region that had a sizeable army and it was apparently this that influenced the committee's judgment.

The three issues, namely the Ataturk Peace Prize, the Kurdish question, and the arms deal, were matters that indeed affected the relationship between 1991 and until beyond 2000. Despite these issues having deeply affected the nature of South Africa's relationship with Turkey, there appears to be a change of heart beyond 2000. This is partly due to the change of political leadership in both South Africa and Turkey and to the increase in trade. But before we expound upon the new political and commercial connections that have strengthened during the past few years, let us place them in a broader context.

Looking back into the past, it is an established fact that South Africa moved from having been identified as a pariah apartheid state – a status that it shared with the Zionist state of Israel and a few others - in the 1980s to what some has described as a developmental democratic state by the 1990s; a period that coincides with the post-Cold War era. The implication of this description is that unlike the apartheid state in which the majority of the people had no voting rights and in which they were severely discriminated they all enjoy the radically changed conditions in which they can freely vote and participate in the general process of nation-building without being prejudiced or disadvantaged. And since South Africa has a fairly liberal Constitution, each and every individual's rights have been secured and protected. In fact, soon after Mandela was freed by the apartheid government under F. W. De Klerk in February 1990, many nation-states established diplomatic ties with South Africa. These developments thus forced the government to re-position itself in the political arena regionally and internationally.

On the regional front, South Africa was welcomed into SADC and on the international front it was given the green light to join the UN and other international bodies. Whilst South Africa was busy trying to gradually dismantle the apartheid robes during this post-Cold War period and making inroads into SADC, Turkey as a sovereign state at the foot of the European continent continued to knock on the door of the EU for membership. Despite having managed to comply with most if not all the EU criteria it did not succeed to become a member and was continuously disadvantaged because of its features that have been highlighted by Huntington's (1993) work as ingredients that would eventually lead to a 'Clash of Civilizations'. In spite of Turkey's buoyant economic status and strong secular outlooks and ideals, EU once again rejected the Republic of Turkey's quest and continued to discriminate against it because of its religious and cultural identity; an identity that, we suspect, will remain an obstacle to be granted membership. It should, however, be stated that even though Turkey was not brought on board as an EU member, it made overtures to other states in the region. According to Akgun's interview (2011), Turkey adopted an open door policy under Turgut Özal towards the nation-states in its neighborhood from the time the Cold war ended (Deliso 2011). Özal did so by exploring and establishing diplomatic and commercial connections with ex-Soviet bloc countries that form part of the Central Asian Turkic states. Consequently Turkey set up and created the three-party Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) into Central Asia and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Hale (2010) further underscored the point when he stated that Özal made a determined effort and also "reversed Turkey's previously stand-off attitude to middle eastern conflicts by giving important support to the coalition powers in the Gulf war of 1991, believing that a new activism in regional politics could be combined with Turkey's continuing alliance with the western powers".

During the post-Cold War period (circa 1989/1990-1996/1997), which Mills (2000) characterized as the Honeymoon Years in the case of South Africa, both South Africa and Turkey were exploring ties in their respective neighborhoods, setting up diplomatic relations, expanding commercial connections, and considering other channels and avenues of deepening their relationships. All of these demonstrated that because of the abundant minerals, human resources and other items that pushed both nation-states into the middle powers sector, they were able to strike bonds with as many countries as they desired. And these assisted them in a variety of ways. It was within this active diplomatic period that Turkey also opted to forge ties with South Africa. Having made this point, let us shift our focus to the more recent developments that seem to be transforming the relationship into a mature one.

### **3.2 Taking the Turn towards a Mature Relationship: 1999-2011**

As noted earlier, democratic South Africa's DFA was a department that was hard at work on a fresh foreign policy but one that lacked the necessary specialists who could help chart out and give firm directions. It appears that South Africa only got its foreign policy act in order when Thabo Mbeki came to the office as the new president of the country. One reason for this was that Mbeki, who specialized in IR, was familiar with the IR scene and had a hands-on approach and as a result appointed DFA staff whom could guide and direct. Evans (1999) argued in his article 'South Africa's Foreign Policy after Mandela' that Mbeki's 'African Renaissance' project would stand him in good stead if he is able to re-invent the country "as a global trading state with string regional and international interests." Mbeki, it may be argued, basically did that. He tied his concept of 'African Renaissance' to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to advance a strategy for socio-economic progress nationally, regionally and continentally. Throughout Mbeki's term in office, he used NEPAD as an important frame for dialogue and transformation. Regrettably, though he was fired-up and advocated the AR and NEPAD he succumbed to the corporate drivers of globalization and thus did not achieve what he had planned (Bond 2002). In any event, we witnessed the rise of an expanded diplomatic corps as well as the opening up of many embassies and consulates in different parts of the world during Mbeki's office as president. In some cases, these were preceded by official visits and in others the commercial and political activities were facilitated by the existing embassies or consulates.

From 2000 onwards the DFA increased its official visits abroad and Aziz Pahad, the then South African deputy minister of foreign affairs (as it was known until then), went as the first known dignitary to Turkey during June 2000; a point that we mentioned earlier. As a follow-up, the head of the Turkish foreign trade department undertook a trip later that year. And in response, official representatives from both reciprocated in February 2001. Deputy President Jacob Zuma travelled to Turkey during October 2003. The visits tangibly demonstrated the intense interest that the respective official representatives had in one another's countries and it paved the way for the Turkish Prime Minister's significant three day trip during 2005. Armed with a new African policy document the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan decided to pay an official visit to South Africa; on this trip he was accompanied by an entourage of business persons and other members from his cabinet and diplomatic unit (cf. Uchehara 2008). Apart from the Turkish PM and his delegation's trip to South Africa, they also visited a few other African states that cleared the path for the first important Turkish-African summit during November 2005. This was followed by the second during December 2006, the third during December 2007, and the

fourth during 2008. Whilst each of these summits reinforced the growing relationship between Turkey and African states, South Africa was viewed as a special plays in Turkish eyes. This was borne out by the Turkish PM’s second important visit to South Africa during October 2011; at this important meeting the two countries agreed “to further develop their relations, which in time might turn into high-level council meetings and fuel momentum between the regional powers”. In fact the meeting between Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan critically reviewed their respective relations which included the status and implementation of agreements and programmes of cooperation. Perhaps it would be informative to share some trade statistics at this juncture that demonstrate to what extent trade has been shaping up between these two countries. Some of the agreements that were signed to boost and facilitate trade and investment were:

- Agreement Concerning the Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments;
- Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Tourism;
- Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement;
- Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income; and
- Mutual Assistance on Customs Agreement (cf. <http://www.southafrica.org.tr/>)

With these agreements as a backdrop, we can briefly assess the statistics from a Turkish perspective we note that the trade volume between the two countries amounted to \$242 million in 2000 and jumped to \$1,969 billion by the end of 2009; this included imports valued that reached \$1,102 billion. And by 2010 its export and import to South Africa was around \$369 million and \$889 million respectively.

Table 1 (source: [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-economic-relations-with-south-africa.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-economic-relations-with-south-africa.en.mfa))

YEARS	EXPORT	IMPORT	VOLUME	BALANCE
2000	71.049	171.810	242.859	-100.761
2001	77.871	345.028	422.899	-267.157
2002	87.644	211.027	298.671	-123.383
2003	121.528	335.713	457.241	-214.185
2004	190.113	1.006.683	1.196.796	-816.570
2005	315.739	1.259.978	1.575.717	-944.239
2006	598.489	1.793.113	2.391.602	-1.194.624
2007	653.785	2.172.298	2.826.083	-1.518.513
2008	1.238.632	1.502.492	2.741.124	-263.860
2009	866.720	1.102.512	1.969.232	-235.792
2010	369.269	889.614	1.258.883	-520.345

The above table tells us a fair story of the trade relations between the two. The mere fact that the imports/exports jumped from millions to billions prove that a healthy commercial connection has been established. And since the Turkish PM helped to review the relations very recently we are quite optimistic that a better future is in sight. Bozkurt (2011) made an important remark when he said that “analysts point out that even though the current figure between the two countries is not that impressive, they say it offers huge potential once the necessary structure is in place”. And he added that “Erdogan's visit aims to secure that structure so that solid and sustainable growth can be attained in trade volume”. We definitely agree with Bozkurt's comments since the potential for growth lies in different sectors and not only in trade; that said, specific structures should be set up between these nation-states during this era of globalization and thereafter they should be in the position to exercise their potential as middle powers that should be able to demonstrate their respective identities as major players in the interest of and among the developing countries.

#### **4. A Way Forward into the Next Decade (circa 2012-2020)**

In this essay we tried to provide a cursory glance of the relationship that exists between South Africa and Turkey. However, in order for this relationship to advance and go forward we need to think outside the box and not just be fixated with diplomatic and trade as two important aspects of this relationship; two areas that Aydin (2003) suggested. We should think of other ways of assessing their ties and identify particular projects and structures that may assist in this regard.

Having said this, let us conclude by sharing a few thoughts of how the relationship at a non-state actors' level might assist in improving the connections. As academics and academic institutions we have a responsibility towards our respective countries in various capacities and particularly as researchers and consultants. It is the task of academic institutions to set up structures such as committees or centres that would devote their time, efforts and monies to improve the bilateral and multi-lateral relations between and among countries.

In the case of South Africa and Turkey is an area that has not been given attention at all and it is perhaps an opportune moment to intervene and change the situation. The situation can be changed by mounting programs and courses/modules that specially focus on bi-lateral relations historically, geographically, socially, politically, strategically and commercially. In addition, researchers and potential students have to be trained in the languages that spoken in the respective countries. Turkish students, for example, study isi-Xhosa or isi-Zulu as well as knowing English; they should learn about the different cultural groups in South Africa and how these influence socio-political outcomes. The same argument applies to South African students and researchers; in South Africa a Turkish language program has to be set up at one of the universities and after having completed the course these students should come to Turkey to do language proficiency tests/examinations and stay among the people for three to six months. Institutions should also set up exchange programs that would help them to be exposed to the regions within which both nation-states find themselves.

At the non-academic level, NGO should consider partnering with NGOs in one another's countries. Two examples regarding this may suffice: the one is that IHH can team up with Gift of the Givers that has been extremely active in the humanitarian sector and that has the full support of the

government in South Africa, and the other is the Foundation of Human Rights can partner with Mazlumder and see how they can work towards educating their respective communities in the area of Human Rights Education. In addition, we have so far seen many Turkish funded schools having been established in South Africa. Whilst this is a laudable as a form of educational intervention, we should work towards school partnerships where pupils/learners from Turkey spend a semester in South African schools and vice versa. These and many other projects can help to address the shortcomings that exist in both countries in international relations. They will not only complement the economic investments and political cooperation that both governments have in mind but they will also bring about the necessary mind-set changes within the next decade. Instead of tip-toeing in this era of globalization, the two should compete and run alongside one another into the future.

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