

BOOK REVIEW

Federico Donelli. *Turkey in Africa: Turkey's Strategic Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2021. 224 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95. Paper. ISBN: 9780755636990.

Turkey's policy of engagement with Africa keeps attracting academic interest, not only in Turkey, but in Europe as well. Federico Donelli's recently published book *Turkey in Africa: Turkey's Strategic Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa* provides a well-documented and comprehensive analysis in this regard. Donelli's principal goal is to highlight the distinct characteristics of Turkey's Africa policy and the way it is put into practice, by making comparisons with other extra-regional actors and by questioning the sustainability of Turkey's sui generis approach.

In this book, Donelli further develops the "Ankara consensus," a concept which he coined in 2018 in order to explain Turkey's approach to the continent. In this respect, he argues that the Ankara consensus is "a new model for the economic, political and social development of African countries" (121). He qualifies this approach as different from the Washington consensus, which is mostly followed by former colonial powers and Western countries, from the Beijing consensus, the state-led development model of China, as well as from the South-South cooperation. The Ankara consensus, he argues, is rather a particular mix of these three frameworks: liberal and private sector-led in nature, unconditional, and—allegedly—mutually beneficial. Coupled with Islamic humanitarianism, this particular policy framework, according to him, makes Turkey a "hybrid actor" on the continent.

Donelli also differentiates the Turkish approach from that of other emerging powers whose priorities are principally commercial and economic, by characterizing Turkey's approach as having a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder framework. He further highlights the role of Turkish non-state actors in the implementation of the policy in humanitarian, development, and educational areas. When detailing the implementation of the Ankara consensus, he concentrates on the Horn of Africa, and Somalia in particular.

Donelli's analysis is sound yet unconventional on the theoretical side. He associates the formulation of such a policy mix with neoclassical realism, which explains foreign policy as an outcome of "international structure and domestic influence and a complex relation between the two" (16). In this respect, he attributes not only the conception and launch of a full-fledged Africa engagement but also the critical adjustments in the policy to the internal and external circumstances, and accordingly to neoclassical realism. Correspondingly, he duly points out the setbacks in other foreign policy fronts, such as Syria and the EU, and in the domestic realm, namely the authoritarian drift in Turkey and the ultimate split between the Gulen movement and the Erdogan regime in 2016. These developments have drastically altered the multitrack and multidimensional nature of the Turkish approach, in which the state has become excessively dominant over non-state actors.


As rightly identified by Donelli, Somalia is an outstanding ground in which to observe the evolution of the Turkish approach and to follow the implementation of the Ankara consensus. However, apart from Somalia, there is no other African country where Turkey's multifaceted and multi-stakeholder engagement is exemplified. Even in Somalia, Turkey's interest and engagement in political issues have been limited. For instance, Turkey's mediation/facilitation efforts between Somalia and Somaliland, as well as between the federal government and Al-Shabaab, have proven unproductive, and in no other African conflict has Turkey's mediation been called for. Therefore, Turkey's Somalia engagement remains an exception and can hardly be repeated elsewhere on the continent.

Donelli mentions the Gulen movement occasionally in the first six chapters, given the obvious choice of analyzing it in the final chapter. However, this choice in a sense understates the influence of the movement in the formulation and implementation of Turkey's Africa policy from the very beginning. In addition, he claims that the movement, after falling out with the JDP government, has become an "anti-state" lobby in Africa (6) and a "major threat to the country's [Turkey's] image and policies abroad" (172), without making a distinction between the "state" and the "government," and without referring to a particular source. He also argues that the movement's sympathizers were "infiltrating" the local bureaucracies in Africa (178), without substantiating his claim with empirical data or evidence.

Finally, despite stating that he used semi-structured interviews and field observations in his research (18), Donelli does not specify these sources in the book, with a single exception, that is, the interview conducted in 2014 on a secondary aspect of the overall argument (82).

Nevertheless, the book provides the most recent and comprehensive account of Turkey's active Africa engagement policy in the last two decades. Donelli is successful in striking a balanced and objective approach, an aspect that is generally absent in the analyses of most Turkey-based scholars. With this publication, the author has made an entry into the small group of non-Turkish scholars to have published a book exclusively on Turkey's Africa

policy. Readers interested in African studies or Turkish studies would definitely find this book useful.

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