

# Opportunity Found: Exploring the Success and Prospect of the Turkey-Africa Cooperation

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## ABSTRACT

Ankara views the breakdown of accession talks with the European Union as a fracture of its ambivalent perspective and its distrust of Western powers. As a result, it is reorienting itself toward Africa as an option within the anarchic structure of the international system to realize its regional and global ambitions. This research article argues that the shift in power dynamics in the international system from a realist framework and the increasing role of domestic structural factors and actors as part of the normative underpinnings of a liberal framework explain Turkey-Africa cooperation. The author examines the success and potential of this cooperation and concludes that the Turkey-Africa opening is undoubtedly mutually beneficial if strengthened. It also potentially positions Turkey as an effective Western ally in a potential East-West rivalry.

**Keywords:** foreign policy, international politics, soft power, Turkey-Africa.

**Published Online:** December 20, 2022

**ISSN:** 2796-1176

**DOI:** 10.24018/ejpolitics.2022.1.5.49

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## I. INTRODUCTION

More than four decades after Gourevitch's (1978) assertion that "we all know about interaction; we all understand that international politics and domestic structures influence each other," it is becoming increasingly clear that the international system and domestic factors and structures can influence states' preferences for foreign policy and international behavior (Cerny, 1995; Frieden & Rogowski, 1996; Oatley, 2011; Davutoğlu SAM, 2012, p. 44). It follows that the political direction of a country can be affected by both a mix of shifting power dynamics at the system level, from a realist point of view, and by the increasing influence of domestic structural factors and actors, from a liberal point of view. This helps to understand why Turkey is increasingly oriented toward Africa without necessarily implying a turning away from its Western or Eastern allies. On the one hand, the changing polarity at the systemic and regional levels is forcing Turkey to reevaluate the basic principles of its foreign policy and establish operational procedures and tactics to perform effectively on the international stage (Savas & Oguzhan, 2014). On the other hand, contextual considerations at the unit level, such as Turkey's historical heritage, national interest, and the active participation of local businesses and stakeholders, play an essential role in how it responds to this development (Kohler *et al.*, 2013, p. 220; Eyryce, 2015, p. 105).

Although Turkey has been "a long-standing U.S. ally and staunch member of NATO [and] has played a pivotal, if, at times delicate, role in the defense of Europe and the Middle East" (Kuniholm, 1991, p. 1), its relationship with the West is fraught with a mutual distrust that dates back to the Treaty of Sèvres. Under the stillborn treaty signed on August 10, 1920, but never ratified by a Turkish parliament, Turkey was split up among the allied powers, and Armenians and Kurds were to be granted autonomy (Montgomery, 1972, p. 775; The Turkish Peace Treaty, 1921). Because of this historical context, Turkey has taken a critical stance toward Western nations since the establishment of its Republic in 1923 (Saatciolu & Tekin, 2021). The ill intentions of Western powers in Turkey's perception continue unabated. They have been exacerbated by the stalemate in accession talks between Turkey and the European Union, contributing to Turkey's growing skepticism of Western powers. It also explains, at least in part, the country's determination to seek other options within the international system's anarchic structure. Against this backdrop, Turkey's relations with Africa are a grand strategy that "embodies an epic story in Turkish foreign policy [that is] unprecedented in modern history" (Baç, 2020). This research article analyzes Turkey's foreign policy towards Africa. It examines how establishing international relations between Turkey and Africa responds to shifting power dynamics in the international system and the influence of factors and actors at the unit level.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As a system, international relations often consist of individual units, the most common of which are sovereign states. For clarity, we use the terms “states” and “units” interchangeably. While theorists concerned with domestic politics emphasize the heterogeneity of these groups, systems theorists emphasize their homogeneity. Common to all of these studies is an interest in the plethora of interactions among three variables: Unit, System, and Outcome. The researcher’s primary focus should be on the outcome variable, usually a nation’s policies or economy at a given period in international politics. Thus, domestic, and systemic explanatory variables are particularly relevant in international relations because of their potential impact on the outcome of interest (Chaudoin, Milner, & Pang, 2015, p. 278).

We argue that Turkey’s reorientation toward Africa is a realist foreign policy pursued with a liberal toolkit, given the degree to which domestic versus systemic variables dictate Turkey’s state preferences. The academic approach to understanding international politics, known as realism, provides social science explanations for global behavior. For realists, the focus is on the existence of anarchy that orders the international system and determines the identities and political orientations of states as strategies for their global operations (Boix, 1998; Kitschelt *et al.*, 1999; Mosley, 2003). As a result, policies are conceived as strategies in the face of structural uncertainty that persists throughout international system episodes. Moreover, realists argue that international order creates power structures that could shift from unipolar to multipolar (Walt, 1979, Jervis, 1997, Wendt, 1999). This shift is determined mainly by what Oguzlu (2020) refers to as the maneuverability of states, especially those of medium and smaller powers, and it provides countries with various alternatives for implementing their foreign policies. As a result, regional powers gain more “maneuverability” when growing potential hegemonies around the world challenge the hegemony of an established global hegemon. In this case, as Western hegemony in global politics erodes and current events in the international system continue, Turkey is increasing its efforts to maintain relations with emerging non-Western nations. Moreover, realists strongly emphasize “metaphysical” notions of human nature to explain the dynamics of power distribution that ultimately lead to competition (Morgenthau, 1978, p. 2; Brown, 2011). This conflict becomes more difficult whenever a state expands its military and economic capabilities to improve its sense of security by gaining as much power as possible and gaining influence in international politics. According to Gideon (1998, p. 149), “foreign policy activity is the record of nervous states jockeying for position within the framework of a given systemic power configuration.” This expansion can be done by using military power to expand its borders, wealth, natural resources, strategic positions, technology, population, etc., to exert more significant influence on the international system and get more of its wants. When one nation seeks expansion, other nations, driven by fear, automatically rise to compensate by exploiting existing opportunities within the structure or benefiting from other positive developments (Morgenthau, 1978; Waltz, 2000, p. 1–2). The fact that Turkey and Africa have similar histories and values is one of the positive developments for Turkey.

The liberal approach, on the other hand, excludes any reference to “metaphysical” concepts of human nature and claims that society is conceptually prior to the state (Gourevitch, 1978; Kayser, 2007; Boix, 2011). The reason for this is that the liberal approach views human nature as immaterial. It is centered on the state’s objectives to establish social order and advance individual well-being. They emphasize that people and privately established organizations are the political actors in domestic society and aim to promote their interests while influencing government decisions (Waltz, 1979; Jackson *et al.*, 1998). This suggests that state preferences and government policies reflect the interest of a segment of society, which invariably dictates international behavior.

Realists and liberals view Turkey’s foreign policy decisions from different perspectives. Realists, on the one hand, exclude and downplay the impact of changes in vital national preferences; liberals, on the other hand, provide clear, factual, and practical interpretations of these decisions. However, while liberals differ from realists in excluding and dismissing changes in key national preferences from their analysis, both schools believe that nations behave purposefully and view international politics as a two-stage process in which states determine their priorities before engaging in strategic interstate relations (Easton, 1965). In this way, influences at both the system level and the unit level interact to influence the behavior of nations and explain Turkey’s decisions in its foreign policy toward Africa.

## III. TURKEY’S REORIENTATION TOWARD AFRICA

The West has recently warmed to Africa’s political stability and growth momentum. The West views China’s increasing competition for Africa’s vast strategic resources as the main reason for its waning influence on the continent. China’s mix of mineral trade and significant infrastructure investment to acquire essential resources has paid off, changing the conventional pattern of geopolitical struggle on the continent. The protagonists’ capabilities on the continents are complementary and no longer mutually exclusive as the goals of geostrategic games shift from political hegemony to commercial gain. As a result, new international

players have emerged to employ various strategies to capitalize on Africa's growing trade and investment potential. Before 1998, Turkey did not have good relations with Africa. It associated Africa with unfavorable characteristics such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, hunger, and much more, and considered it worthy of academic attention only in the larger context of world political history (Hakura & Royal Institute of International Affairs 2011; Yilmaz, 2009, p. 4). However, like many other states, it actively pursues a foreign policy allowing it to compete with other African actors. This is especially true given Turkey's status as a "global swing state" that can influence the direction of the hegemonic game between China and the West. This development has made the cooperation between Turkey and Africa a compelling discourse in contemporary global politics (Fontaine & Kliman, 2013).

#### IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKEY-AFRICA COOPERATION

The statement made by Ali Babacan in his opening speech at the Ambassadors' Conference on July 15, 2008, at the Bilkent Hotel and Conference Center in Ankara that Turkey attaches "special importance to Africa" as part of its new perspective policy is the result of a long history of Turkey-Africa relations (Babacan, 2008, para. 40). Turkey-Africa engagement has its origins in Ottoman Turkey. For explanatory purposes, two geographic borders can be distinguished: North Africa, which was part of the Ottoman Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Sub-Saharan Africa, which dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For clarity, Turkey's relations with Africa can be divided into three main periods. The first phase covers the pre-Ottoman period until the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. According to Ahmed and Al-Suwaidani (2019), the "Ottoman State (Turkey) played an important role in maintaining security by confronting Portuguese intervention in North Africa." However, they point out that "relations deteriorated in the republican era due to Turkey's limited political and economic capacities on the one hand, and the republic's westward orientation and severance of ties with the Arab-Islamic East on the other." As a result, the political class of the time considered the Western orientation, especially membership in the European Union, pointless because it did not pay off. The third phase, which led to Turkey's current assertive foreign policy orientation, began during the presidency of Turgut Ozal in the early 1990s. According to Katerina Rudincová (2014), this current style changed "Turkey's foreign policy orientation and started the policy of better openness, especially in the state economy." Ozkan's (2018) observation is conclusive. He emphasizes that the current strategy is part of the effort to define Turkey's position in post-Cold War world politics, especially in light of the country's failure to achieve its primary goal of joining the European Union. Therefore, Turkey's current African agenda is partly a reaction to the European Union's rejection of Turkey as a candidate country in 1997. Following this rejection, Turkey's political elite began to explore alternative options for expanding its foreign policy to Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

To engage in Africa, Turkey produced a new policy paper in 1998 entitled *Opening up to Africa Policy*. This document laid the groundwork for increased cooperation with African countries on several levels. However, efforts to open up to Africa stalled until 2002, when the ruling party replaced a three-party coalition after an internal political and economic crisis threatened the country. On April 12, 2005, Turkey was granted "observer status" in the African Union (A.U.), a significant step forward in its international engagement. It was later designated a "strategic partner" at the Addis Ababa summit in January 2008. According to the Turkish government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no date), the increase in the number of African embassies in Ankara from ten in early 2008 to thirty-seven demonstrates its robust engagement and a solid commitment to the continent.

#### V. TURKEY'S SOFT POWER

Turkey's multidimensional foreign policy is consistent with Nye's concept of soft power and was responsible for developing the "Africa Action Plan" in 1998 and the declaration of 2005 as the "Year of Africa." According to Joseph Nye (2008, p. 94), there are three ways to influence other people's behavior: by using coercive threats, inducements, and payments; by using attraction to get others to want what you want. Instead of using force to get people to want what they want, users can use "soft power" instead of "hard power." A state's plan to win over another nation or encourage it to want what it wants without resorting to force or economic coercion is the basis of the concept of "soft power" (Nye, 2011). Intangible resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions are all components of the soft power toolbox. The author argues that soft power, which refers to nonmaterial latent power, is a strategic tool for governments in anarchic societies. (even if some argue that soft power contradicts the assumptions of realism) This is consistent with Nye's argument that "there is no contradiction between realism and soft power" (Nye, 2011; Nye, 2017). This is especially true because rationality extends beyond traditional power sources, but soft power is an immaterial force that can be converted into conventional military power (Mearsheimer, 2001). States with soft power can use this strategy to defend their interests and legitimize their policies in far-flung

regions. This explains why, since 2005, Turkey has declared its ambition to become Africa's most important strategic partner and to play a critical role in resolving the continent's numerous challenges.

## VI. STRATEGIES FOR TURKEY-AFRICA COOPERATION

Turkey-Africa engagement is determined by the interactions of state agencies and non-state entities such as religious groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs) (Özkan, 2010, p. 539). Therefore, the activities of the many parties involved in this process must be considered when evaluating Turkey-Africa policy. After the A.U. designated Turkey as a "strategic partner" in 2008, Turkey's momentum in Africa accelerated significantly. The Turkish government has established a multi-layered action plan to strengthen its relations through political and economic incentives. This strategy involves multi-layered interactions between state and non-state agencies, consistent with a post-international implementation of foreign policy (Haufler, 2004; Wheeler, 2011, p. 56). In this arrangement, which has been referred to as a "smooth convergence of both governmental and business policies" (Ozkan, 2010), state and non-state entities work together to implement foreign policy.

How do these state agencies and non-state agencies interact? Patterns of cooperation, complementarity, supplementation, or conflict determine their interactions. The interaction between state and non-state agencies implementing foreign policy is frequently cooperative. Notably, in Turkey, the principal areas of cooperation between state agencies and non-state agencies include humanitarian aid, development, and consultations. In this case, the government collaborates with these agencies to achieve mutually beneficial goals (Kalaycioglu, 2011, p. 82); however, the coordination process, funding, and policy implementation may necessitate significant government involvement, which has a significant influence over project outcomes. The Turkish ruling party's (AKP) goal of developing new markets for its exports mirrors that of other nonprofit organizations, such as Muslim religious groups seeking to improve their relations with African Muslims. Government agencies focus on fundamental rights in this interaction, whereas faith-based nonprofit organizations focus on religious services and accountability. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, also known as TIKA, gives Africans access to water as a fundamental right to enhance their lives; at the same time, faith-based organizations provide religious teachings and activities (Ozkan, 2010, p. 53). Thus, Africans' frequent water pollution and water-related deaths are reduced, while religious understanding that cleanliness is synonymous with godliness is taught. According to Karlsson (2019), the Red Crescent fulfills another TIKA goal by launching food aid projects in Africa, while Muslim humanitarian organizations simultaneously uphold the Islamic practice of sharing with the needy and those in need. Despite their different tactics, the two groups' actions and goals coincide.

Relations between Turkey and Africa also empirically model complementarity. Such cases involve transportation, investment, and income trading, with minimal government involvement (Beasley, 2013). Ozkan (2010) notes that non-state entities collaborate with state agencies to implement specific policies and influence future decisions. In this way, they also legitimize their foreign policies and use soft power to build a positive image in target countries. These hosting arrangements typically include official visits, conferences, and Turkish Airlines (Wheeler, 2011). Alkaly (2016) describes the two-step process. She notes that while the main goal is to agree on cooperation in transportation, trade, health, tourism, and visa arrangements, this initiative has allowed non-state entities to do business throughout the region. In this case, the government is looking to strengthen relations with the states, while the rest of the delegation is focused on the commercial agenda. For example, although it is a private company, Turkish Airlines, which is considered Turkey's national carrier, provides air transportation services and supports Turkey's political agenda by issuing visas to African people in business on U.S. visas in cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The interaction can also be supplementary. In this case, the non-state actors have greater freedom to conduct their business, and there is minimal state control. In this interaction, the non-state entities in the target country work to pursue policies consistent with Turkey's state policies (Hazar, 2000). Autonomy is expressed in such a way that the involvement of state actors is limited to securing tax relief, infrastructure, legal support, and moral support through official visits, among other things. In this interaction, state agencies influence non-state entities to take actions that implement their foreign policy while providing support. For example, TIKA's operations in Africa began with establishing its first office in Africa in 2005, focusing on health, professional training, and agriculture. Initially, operations were conducted in partnership with various state agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture and Health (Hazar, 2000, p. 110). However, many other non-state entities from Turkey and Africa collaborated and cooperated with TIKA in implementing its programs in Africa. As the non-state entities acquired more expertise, they began to initiate their projects and implement Turkey's policy with minimal state control.

Alkaly (2016) notes that the Diyanet Foundation provided food aid in several sub-Saharan countries during Ramadan. This prompted other SFAs, such as Bodrum Business Association, Muhammediye



Taskopru Foundation, and Aksaray Business Association, to offer cash and food aid programs. Aside from their initial success, these ventures have evolved into long-term ventures in Africa. In addition, schools providing quality education have been established in countries with which Turkey already had relations, such as Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria. This results from Turkey's interest in Africa, as reflected in the 1998 Opening Action Plan (Bamigboye, 2022). As evidence of the successful implementation of its foreign policy goals under this commitment, the number of enrolled students has increased. Currently, there are several Turkish schools on the continent, even in countries where Turkey has no diplomatic presence. Afrocentric institutes in Turkish universities are also seeking opportunities for cultural exchange (Zamzam Foundation, 2010).

In contrast, not all foreign policy considerations require direct cooperation between the SBA and the SFA. Environmentalists, entrepreneurs, and human rights activists oppose many countries' foreign policies through "discursive actions that contradict the state's policy perspectives" (Alkaly, 2016; Wheeler, 2011). In these interactions, non-state agencies fail or refuse to implement foreign policy by discouraging state agencies' efforts to achieve foreign policy goals. This is usually the case when state agencies and non-state entities have differing views on fundamental aspects of their foreign policy objectives. Both actors can succeed depending on the regional support, funding, and support level. A similar case has occurred in Sudan. Numerous non-state entities opposed the Turkey-Sudan foreign policy, which supported President Omar al-Bashir despite genocide allegations. Increasing pressure from all sides, especially from the international community, forced Turkey's officials to engage in stealth diplomacy on issues that damaged their reputations. As a result, al-Basheer declined an invitation to the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit (Karlsson, 2009). Another example of state agencies' intrusion in the non-state entities' activities jeopardizing Turkey-Africa relations occurred in 2013 when Ankara University, under pressure from the government, discontinued its scholarly publication, *Africa*. The editors assessed Turkey's policies toward Africa and its refugees and migrants. As mentioned in the third issue, Festus Okey, a Nigerian citizen, died unexpectedly at a Turkish police station. Mention of this incident in its analysis led to censorship and the suspension of the publication, which the publishers condemned as an attempt to restore the bureaucratic viewpoint they had opposed (Jia, 2016).

## VII. SUCCESS OF THE COOPERATION

Turkey's involvement in Africa is seen as an attempt to revive and consolidate pre-Ottoman diplomatic relations between the two regions based on commonalities in history, economy, culture, military, and administration. Turkey's first step, however, was to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with all African nations that gained independence in the 1960s. This culminated in establishing a diplomatic presence on both sides, and the establishment of embassies and consulates attests to the strength of the commitment. There are currently Turkish embassies and over 20 honorary consulates in Africa to promote good relations, and these countries have equally maintained a diplomatic presence in Turkey (Karaca, 2000). The African Union recognized Turkey's concerted efforts to foster positive relations with Africa by granting Turkey "observer status" in April 2005 and then "partner" in 2008. Similarly, high-level official visits have helped both sides strengthen their relations (Kirisçi, 2009). President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's most recent visit was a three-day diplomatic trip to three African countries between October 18–20, 2021. During this time, he reaffirmed his government's resolve to boost bilateral trade in Nigeria to \$5 billion, among other things. Since 2009, Turkey has donated \$1 million to the African cause. It has also demonstrated excellent relations by accrediting embassies of African countries (Walker, 2011).

With the help of other international communities and regional organizations, such as the European Union, Turkey has significantly improved its trade relations with Africa. Through summits, Turkey has been able to rebuild, maintain and improve its social, political, economic, and cultural relations with Africa and find possible solutions to the continent's problems. As proof of this success, four international summits were organized between Turkey and Africa between 2005 and 2021 (Hermann, 1990; Kirişçi, 2006; Yilmaz, 2008; Yel, 2009). The lifting of Turkey's restrictions on economic initiatives in Africa due to its participation in the African Development Bank (AFDB) is an essential success of these summits. It solidifies Turkey's foreign policy objectives (Adelman, 2003). Other notable achievements include the signing of pacts and agreements on economic and trade cooperation (Mehmet & Akguen, 2010; Yilmaz, 2008), increasing private sector investment in Africa, expanding national airlines routes to Africa (Tihanyi *et al.*, 2015), and cross-cultural marriages that exude trust, among other examples of cultural cooperation (Keyman, 2009). Also, economic cooperation is sustained in many ways. The Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) has established economic councils in 19 African countries and opened 26 trade consulates in various capitals. Between 2003 and 2020, the volume of trade between the two regions will double, from \$6 billion (2003) to \$17.5 billion (2015) to \$25.3 billion (2020). (Jia, 2016). Turkey's current portfolio of capital and trade investments in Africa totals \$77.1 billion and includes more than 1,150 projects (RTMAF, no date).

The Turkish approach to providing humanitarian and development assistance to African countries in need has been extensive. Humanitarian diplomacy is a critical element of Turkey's policy toward Africa. According to the World Humanitarian Report, Turkey's official development assistance totaled \$3.3 billion in 2014. Africa received \$383.3 million (\$153.6 million for sub-Saharan Africa). This made Turkey the world's third-largest donor of humanitarian and development aid to Africa. The Turkish government has contributed significantly to health care in Africa through the Ministry of Health and TIKA. Approximately 300,000 people were tested for cataract therapy in 2014, and 53,000 underwent surgery. Approximately 600 health professionals, 500 doctors, 100 nurses, and 600 Turkish medical professionals participated in the training conducted in 20 African countries. (Kilinc, 2009, p. 3). Turkey's largest hospital in Somalia was named after Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Mohammed, 2021). Turkey funds and provides troops for United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa (Kilinc, 2009)

Overall, a prominent strategy is an emphasis on humanitarian initiatives. Also, through education, alleviating poverty, improving African health care, and promoting its products in Africa, Turkey strengthens cooperation with Africa and positions itself as a credible alternative to other small non-state entities. Turkish religious organizations are leveraging their shared Islamic ties with African Muslims, particularly those in North Africa, and promoting closer cooperation within this framework. In the war-torn regions of Somalia and South Sudan, there is another apparent interaction. Bamigboye (2022) identifies that "through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey has played an essential role in mobilizing the business sector and civil society support necessary for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. From an economic perspective, Turkey's position in Africa is maintained through the joint efforts of civil society organizations, African business associations, and the Turkish government." Accordingly, Turkey's hosting of the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Nations proves that this strategy is paying off (Jia, 2016). In addition, many African students have chosen Turkey as their preferred destination for higher education because the Turkish government uses education to recruit students and offers funding opportunities through its organizations. According to one news source, nearly 15,000 international students currently study in Turkey under the *Turkiye Scholarship Program*, and nearly 3,000 students from 104 countries graduated in 2021 (Karlsson, 2009).

#### VIII. POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

According to Fontaine and Kliman (2012), the international order has been significantly strained since the 1990s by the "consolidation of free-market democracies in Europe and elsewhere-along with the economic integration of developing countries." This is partly because traditional backers of the world order, such as the European Union, NATO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States, and Europe, have financial and political limitations.

Although China has not openly challenged the current international order, its emergence on the international stage, and in particular its contribution to the waning influence of the West in Africa through its soft power, threatens the current international order, which is dominated by Western hegemony (Dyer & Anderlini, 2011). This is because China's soft power in Africa is paying off for its voracious manufacturing industry, positioning it as a strategic partner and also making it a target of the new East-West rivalry, especially as the West's influence in Africa wanes (Moyo, 2012). Since 2002, for example, the volume of trade in oil and minerals has increased, partly due to trade agreements that exchange access to natural resources for the development of large infrastructure projects. It has successfully gained access to the resources of African countries rich in oil and minerals. Companies from East and West Asia, such as China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), and China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec), have made significant investments in the African oil and gas industry. In 2018, Chinese oil companies invested over \$21 billion in Nigeria, continuing their meteoric rise on the continent. It is widely known that China's mining industry relies on mining concessions in return for funding infrastructure development in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Ethiopia. The trade value between China and Africa was over \$200 billion in 2019, 20 times higher than in 2000. African exports to China, mainly natural resources, increased from \$5.6 billion to \$93.0 billion over the past decade. According to Chinese data, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) reached a remarkable \$56 billion in 2020. (China-Africa Business Council, no date). According to Alexis & Oguzlu (2014), Chinese loans to African countries have created an alternative source of financing that challenges the IMF's monopoly on development policy in Africa. Thus, trade between China and African countries has expanded dramatically over the past decade and is now a critical factor in Africa's economic development. To what extent does China's rise threaten the international order, and how does Turkey fit into this picture?

With its emergence on the international stage, its contribution to the West's waning influence in Africa, and its strategic positioning through its "soft power," China has become a threat to the current international order, and who influences Africa is becoming a consideration in a competition between global and regional

powers on the continent. On the other hand, Turkey has embarked on a path independent of its Western partnership: NATO, in recognition of the continent's growing importance and its newfound status as a global political player. It has emerged as a new player that is increasingly competitive in the African commodity market. It has established diplomatic and trade cooperation with several African nations, pursuing a strategy similar to that of China. Given the waning influence of the United States on the continent and its determination to maintain its hegemonic status (Mesfin, 2009), Turkey's strategy makes it a potential partner in the inevitable contest with China. This is due to its unique characteristics, such as its expanding economy and strategic regional location. In addition, Turkey benefits from its identity as a Muslim-majority country, which gives it access to areas that Western nations may not have access to (Alexis & Oguzlu, 2014, p. 81). Regarding trade, Turkey's active engagement in Africa is still dwarfed by China, India, and Korea. However, it has qualities that make it an increasingly attractive potential proxy for East-West rivalry.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Due to the stalled European Union accession process, Turkey is significantly changing its policy and strengthening its political and economic ties with Africa. This strategy is based on historical ties and is applied in various fields. Turkey's long-term development projects in Africa range from infrastructure to education. Identifying Islam as a tool in Africa has increased confidence in Turkey and its citizens' activities in Africa. It has also increased confidence in Turkey and its citizens' activities in Africa. In addition, the religion provides Turkey access to areas where Western states are not tolerated. Its African education strategy has helped ensure that future generations have access to the education necessary for true African freedom and development. Turkey-Africa relations, which have evolved into a strategic partnership, would surely be advantageous if sustained and strengthened. Turkey's approach could limit China's indirect influence on the continent while advancing the West's objectives in a competition between global and regional powers on the continent.

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