

***From humanitarianism to drones:
the pragmatic flexibility of Turkey's policy
toward Sub-Saharan Africa***

**Dall'intervento umanitario ai droni:
la flessibilità pragmatica della politica turca
verso l'Africa subsahariana**

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Abstract

Almost two decades after its opening to Africa, Turkey is widely recognized as one of the most active extra-regional players on the continent. This observation raises the question of how this has been possible. In other words, how has Turkey boosted its footprint in Africa? Is there a well-defined and comprehensive strategy or have choices been determined by political contingencies? By examining the different steps of Turkish engagement in Africa, the article tries to address these queries. It sheds light on how Turkey's policy addresses external inputs and domestic political changes through pragmatic flexibility. Over the years, Turkey has tailored its African policy to systemic and domestic changes. This trait has led to a volatile but continuously transforming approach toward Africa.

A distanza di quasi due decenni dall'avvio della sua politica di apertura all'Africa, la Turchia è oggi riconosciuta come uno degli attori extraregionali più attivi sul continente. Questa considerazione solleva la domanda di come ciò sia stato possibile. In altre parole, come ha fatto la Turchia ad aumentare e consolidare la propria presenza in Africa? Quanto ottenuto è il frutto di una strategia ben definita o le scelte sono state determinate dalle contingenze politiche? Esaminando le diverse fasi dell'incremento della presenza turca in Africa, l'articolo cerca di rispondere a queste ed altre domande. In particolare, la ricerca intende utilizzare il caso studio africano per esaminare il modo in cui la politica esterna turca riesca a rispondere agli input esterni e ai cambiamenti politici interni attraverso una flessibilità pragmatica. Questa caratteristica ha portato la Turchia a sviluppare un approccio all'Africa volatile ma in continua trasformazione.

Keywords

Turkey, Development, Defense, Unmanned combat air vehicle (UCAV), Sub-Saharan Africa, Strategy
Turchia, sviluppo, difesa, droni, Africa subsahariana, strategia

Introduction

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the African context has highlighted the emergence of competitive dynamics resulting from the global order transition. The ongoing configuration of a multipolar world order has paved the way to a period characterized by intense competition in trade, technology, and security. Africa has regained geostrategic centrality in this international context by becoming a global competitive arena due to its economic potential and considerable natural resources. Over a few years, many extra-regional players have invested resources to increase their footprint in Africa. Leading players in the so-called new scramble for Africa have not only been the traditional powers but also a growing number of emerging players (Carmody 2011; Ayers 2013; Carpintero, Murray and Bellver 2016). Among them, Turkey is one of the most active. Turkey has carved out significant room for maneuvering in the last two decades, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Though several factors have driven the Turkish opening to Africa, the rationale can be summarized as diversifying the state's economic and political relations and boosting Turkey's international status. Turkey is pursuing material and political gains. Since the launch of an opening agenda toward Africa in 2005, Turkish policy has undergone different phases marked by various approaches. Nowadays, Turkey's approach toward Africa presents two dynamics. The first dynamic concerns the tools used by the Anatolian country to promote its interests. Turkey is exploiting the growing popularity of its defense sector to boost relations with African countries. The second dynamic concerns Turkish geographical projection on the continent. After years of activities focused on the Horn of Africa, since 2020, Ankara is turning its efforts toward West Africa. The trend thus highlights a new shift in Turkey's African policy.

Throughout these years, the role of Turkey in Africa has increased to the extent of attracting the interest of scholars, media, and policymakers. Nowadays, Turkey is well recognized as one of the most active extra-regional players on the continent. How was this possible? How could Turkey increase its footprint in Africa in a short time? In two decades, has Turkey implemented a comprehensive strategy toward Africa, or has it adjusted to changes and circumstances pragmatically and flexibly? Answering these and other questions could help better understand the path Turkey has taken and the depth of the Turkish presence on the African continent. Moreover, the Turkey case study provides insights into how emerging powers seek to increase their influence in a highly competitive environment such as Africa. The article emphasizes the Anatolian country's ability to adapt to global, regional, and domestic changes and challenges by analyzing the traits that have characterized each step of Turkey's policy toward Africa.

The article's main hypothesis is that the lack of a well-defined and comprehensive strategy¹ toward Africa has allowed the Turkish agenda to evolve by developing in a highly flexible way. Such flexibility has enabled Turkey to address the growing challenges of international and regional structural changes.

At the same time, the lack of clear-cut policies and tools allowed Turkish political elites to meet the interests of national economic sectors. The rise of security cooperation and the increase of strategic depth toward Western Africa confirm the extent to which Turkey is an active and influential player in the political affairs of African countries. Further, Turkey's choice to exploit the defense sector in its relations with African countries also reflects the pragmatic flexibility of its approach. Indeed, investing in the security dimension constitutes an adaptation to international competitive multipolarity and domestic policy needs.

Diversification of relations brings Turkey to Sub-Saharan Africa

Although the Turkish presence in Sub-Saharan Africa dates back recently, the phenomenon has immediately aroused the interest of scholars and analysts, and more lately, also from policymakers and practitioners. For this reason, there is a considerable body of literature on the subject, particularly academic articles and book sections. The extant literature indicates that Turkish policy towards Africa, specifically toward Sub-Saharan Africa, began in 2005. After adopting the 'Strategy for enhancing the economic and commercial relations with Africa' program (2003), the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government announced the 'Year of Africa' to implement a new approach towards the continent (Akgün 2010). Although this reference date is correct, the 'opening toward Africa' was not an entirely new project but was rooted in 1998. That year, after Turkey's exclusion from the list of candidate countries for EU membership (Luxembourg Summit), the then Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem reformulated the Turkish foreign policy guidelines (Donelli 2021a). Following years of Western-oriented foreign policy, Turkey had to diversify its relations by opening up to different regions, including Africa. The plan (Africa Action Plan, AAP) highlighted Turkey's great potential in Africa. The most innovative aspect of the AAP was that it postulated overcoming the imaginary boundary that Turkish diplomacy had drawn at the height of Nigeria (Hazar 2000). Historically, Turkey, with few limited exceptions

¹ The article adopts the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms' definition of strategy as "a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives" (AA 2016: 227).

(South Africa), had not established relations with Sub-Saharan African countries. Since 1998, Turkish foreign policy routes have ignored Africa south of the Sahara Desert. Therefore, Turkish political elites had never proposed any plan to increase Turkey's footprint. The AAP's purpose was to develop a diplomatic framework that would facilitate the establishment of economic and cultural agreements with a growing number of African countries (Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu 2015). Turkey's government aimed to enhance its economic prospects by accessing new markets and securing diplomatic support within international forums on the Cyprus issue. To achieve this, they sought to increase Turkish presence in the heart of the African continent. However, Turkey was unable to implement the Cem agenda due to political instability within the ruling coalition, scandals involving the main political parties, and the country's economic fragility before the turn of the millennium.

The JDP government in 2005 exploited a favorable domestic and international environment to reintroduce key principles from the AAP and establish an open-door policy towards Africa as part of an overall restructuring of Turkey's foreign policy framework. Turkey deployed soft power tools to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties with Sub-Saharan African nations. This approach allowed Ankara to gain a more prominent regional role, leading to increased popularity and influence within the international community in just a few years. It is possible to identify three phases of Turkish involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa: 2005-10; 2011-15; 2017-to date. During the early years (2005-10), Turkey developed a *modus operandi* marked by a series of semi-coordinated actions between state agencies and civil society organizations to establish new ties and strengthen pre-existing ones (Genc and Tekin 2014). By exploiting the various tools of public diplomacy, the Turkish government and non-government actors established a tangled network of ties with many African countries political and economic elites. The involvement of civil society actors in implementing foreign policy was both a deliberate strategic choice and a necessity. During these years, the government, constituted by an emerging conservative political elite, experienced several obstacles within the Turkish institutions, including some key ministers, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and most of the diplomatic service and cadres. The traditional Turkish bureaucracy ostracized the African agenda (Akgun and Ozkan 2020). To address this issue, the JDP government adopted a twofold dynamic. Firstly, it established many new institutions and state agencies (i.e., AFAD, Yunus Emre Institute) and strengthened the prerogatives of pre-existing ones (i.e., TIKA, Diyanet, DEIK) to bypass the institutional obstructions. Secondly, JDP adopted a mixed-layer approach to operationalize its foreign policy. The Turkish elites' original conception of the multi-stakeholder approach created the institutional framework for including many civil society organizations. Cooperation between government agencies and civil society organizations

paved the way for the rise of the civil society-state nexus, one of the distinguishing traits of the Turkish presence in Africa (Donelli 2021b). Among the many NGOs, charitable foundations, and religious-based movements involved, some were operating in Africa before the Turkish agenda was launched in 2005 (Atalay 2013). Their knowledge of some African countries and the relationships built over the years made them perfect partners in government policies. While maintaining autonomy of maneuver, several civil society organizations began to operate within the foreign policy guidelines (Atalay 2013; Guner 2021). However, the lack of a well-defined political strategy from the top resulted in a piecemeal effort in which the activities of civil society organizations were often disorganized and uncoordinated.

The close relationship between private initiatives and state goals became increasingly pronounced, particularly in the education and humanitarian aid sectors. In these domains, the Turkish government effectively delegated the pursuit of its interests to non-governmental organizations that were either ideologically aligned or had financial ties to the JDP political elite (Çelik and İşeri 2016). The most famous case was that of organizations and associations affiliated with the Islamist movement led by Fethullah Gulen (Angey-Sentuc 2015; Angey 2018). Despite the limits, the partially coordinated Turkish intervention framework allowed for a rapid opening in some contexts, such as the Horn of Africa. In the Horn, more than elsewhere, it is possible to highlight the pattern or roadmap of Turkish openness and involvement in an African country: (1) opening schools through NGOs and charitable foundations; (2) diplomatic visits accompanied by business people and other representatives of civil society; (3) establishing an office of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA); (4) starting scheduled flights by Turkish Airlines—partially state-owned; and (5) opening an embassy and consulates (Donelli 2017). Turkey has strengthened its ties with countries such as Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda, Sudan, Kenya, and Eritrea by following this approach. Turkey's unique approach, which involved multiple stakeholders, allowed it to quickly establish a foothold in Africa by carving out room for maneuvering in different fields. As with other emerging powers, Turkey emerged as a political and economic alternative to traditional Western players during this period. This image especially appealed to many African nations, who deeply mistrust the European states due to historical memories of the colonial period (Barton 2017). By contrast, Turkey has leveraged the lack of colonial experience to mark its distance from other extra-regional actors active in Africa through a re-interpretation process of its imperial past (Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015). According to the Turkish narrative, the Ottoman presence in Africa is portrayed as an early ante-litteram attempt to resist the imperialism of the European powers (Langan 2017).

The Turkish formula to economic and political development

The second phase of Turkey's African policy was launched between 2010 and 2011, largely due to two structural factors. Internationally, the financial crisis that struck Western economies in 2008 had mid-term effects, resulting in reduced investment and aid allocated to Africa (Berman and Martin 2012). Further, the 2008's financial crisis accelerated the transition toward a competitive multipolar world order (Burrows and Harris 2009; Layne 2012). Another structural factor contributing to Turkey's African policy shift was regional and affected the Middle East and Africa. The power vacuum created by the U.S. retrenchment presented an opportunity for rising players like Turkey to reconfigure the political order according to their preferences (Bank and Karadag 2013; Bazoobandi 2020). In a regional context characterized by tense rivalries, flexible alliances, and proxy warfare, the major Middle Eastern players extended their areas of influence toward Africa (Cannon and Donelli 2020). As a result, the Horn of Africa and, later, the Sahel became new battlegrounds for Middle Eastern political competition (Berg and Meester 2018; De Waal 2019). The watershed of Turkish engagement in Africa was the role undertaken in one of the most politically and humanitarian crisis-torn African countries: Somalia. Since then, the country has become the pivot of Turkish strategy in Africa. In the summer of 2011, Turkey opened a privileged channel for humanitarian aid to the Somali population plagued by months of famine (Abdirahman 2013; Altunisik 2022). Turkey applied its multistakeholder approach, focusing resources on aid and assistance to the Somali people, fatigued by two decades of civil war. Later, Turkey's efforts followed a twofold direction. First, Turkish diplomacy implemented several mediation initiatives. Ankara encouraged dialogue between the internationally recognized Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the country's six federal member states, focusing on two de-facto states, Somaliland and Puntland. Second, Turkey invested in the complex process of state and institution building by focusing on the security sector. Turkey, together with other extra-regional players, launched some initiatives aimed at rebuilding Somali defense capacity (Akpınar 2015). The ultimate objective was to enable the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to confront the primary threat posed by the terrorist group al-Shabaab. Therefore, Turkey's involvement in African political and security affairs began with its mediation attempts in Somalia, aimed at helping the FGS achieve self-sufficiency in security matters (Cannon 2016).

The results achieved in Somalia were more in terms of visibility than effectiveness. However, Turkey's political elites became confident that they could use the growing popularity in Africa to enhance their international status. Concurrently, Turkey began presenting itself to the African countries as an alternative economic and political development model to the West and the Chinese proposal. Turkey's desire to position itself as

an alternative to traditional and emerging powers has driven its promotion of a hybrid approach to development. The Turkish development prescription or formula could be defined as the Ankara Consensus. The concept, absent from the Turkish diplomatic and governmental lexicon, is conceived as a new model for the African countries' economic, political, and social development. In the Turkish formula, principles and norms of different origins - the Western neo-liberal economic and developmental discourse and the Chinese state-led economic growth and prioritization of stability over democracy - are integrated with some specificities of the Turkish development path. Accordingly, Turkey's approach to economic and development projects is characterized by a mix of neo-liberalism, which reflects the Turkish business mindset, and competitive authoritarianism, which is increasingly evident in the government implementation of these projects (Esen and Gumuscu 2016). The hallmarks of the Ankara consensus comprise peacebuilding and a policy of mutual empowerment based on equality, transparency, sustainability, and no-conditionalities. Regarding economic development, Turkey has significantly criticized traditional donors' development policies. It has promoted a middle or third way by implementing a win-win policy in Africa. Although Turkey is not a Global South country, its approach echoes many concepts and means that typify South-South cooperation (SSC). The main trait of the Turkish development formula concerns the horizontality of economic relationships (Apaydin 2012). Turkey's stated goal in its efforts toward African countries is to avoid perpetuating existing dependency relationships. However, in practice, Turkey has not consistently successfully implemented policies that would enhance the self-reliance of African countries. Moreover, in some instances, the interests of the recipient country and Turkey's national interests clash. From the political-institutional angle, Ankara has adopted a non-interference policy in its economic relations with African countries. Following the Chinese experience, Turkey does not tie aid and investments to the implementation of structural reforms of the financial and political institutions of the recipient countries (Sucuoğlu and Sazak 2016). Turkey's policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of African countries has enabled it to strengthen its bilateral relationships with them, irrespective of the nature of the regimes in power. Some African non-democratic regimes see Turkey's political system as both a partner and a viable model to emulate. However, Turkey's approach may indirectly reinforce existing regimes, thereby hindering democratization processes in various African states over the long term.

The desire to present itself as a third way has required effort from Turkey's political elites in terms of narrative. Unlike other non-traditional players, Turkey cannot exploit the Bandung Spirit: a set of principles established by a group of Asian and African countries at the Bandung Conference (1955). The Bandung Spirit emphasized the principles of self-determination, sovereignty, and non-interference in the affairs

of developing states. Some rising powers, such as India and China, still appeal to these principles formally to build a more just and equitable world, covertly, however, to create alliance coalitions. For this reason, Turkey has adopted neo-Ottoman rhetoric by projecting its imperial past in the African context as an anti-colonial narrative (Sazak and Woods 2017). The discourse portrays the principle of solidarity, a significant component of the SSC model, as being reinterpreted through a shared historical past. This past depicts the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as a part of broader European imperialism. In addition, Turkey has adopted a form of Third-Worldism to complement its neo-Ottoman rhetoric. Erdogan's tendency to present himself domestically as a global leader is also employed in Africa. Erdogan has repeatedly used the slogan "world is bigger than five" to position Turkey as an advocate for more equitable global governance (Donelli 2018).

As in the first phase, Turkey did not develop a defined strategy toward Africa, even in the second period. Instead, it operated by taking advantage of the opportunities the international and regional systems offered. The tools employed to promote its goals were often improvised and seldom coordinated. The result was ineffective policies on the ground and relative gains. However, the constant quest for visibility and high media-impact initiatives helped to spread the image of a country with an increasing and branching presence in Africa. Paradoxically, the democratic backsliding that began in Turkey around 2014 helped mitigate the constraint of the lack of coordination. Indeed, the restraints imposed on the freedoms of individuals and associations changed the state-civil society relationship. Turkish authorities closed many organizations and seized the management of NGOs and charitable foundations by establishing top-down control over their activities (Gilley 2015). The policy of informal outsourcing of activities in some fields, such as education, paves the way for the establishment of new state bodies and agencies closer to JDP political elites. This development has increased coordination on the ground. However, it has also undermined the autonomy of civil society organizations, which was one of the main strengths of Turkish policy in Africa. At the same time, bilateral relations became more personalistic. Erdogan's diplomacy and the relations of Turkish political elites with the dominant elites of some African regimes replaced the institutional mechanisms introduced after 2005. Though imperfect, these latter allowed the progressive development of Turkish-African relations. The nature of Turkish intervention underwent a transformation between the end of the second phase and the beginning of the third, particularly in its instruments. While soft power tools were initially employed, the Turkish approach increasingly emphasized the hard dimension of power, encapsulating elements of sharp power.

The rise of defense and security as a bargaining chip

The shift from the first to the second phase of Turkey's policy toward Africa was mainly due to systemic factors, but domestic factors influenced the onset of the third period. The country's democratic backsliding after the 2016 coup attempt triggered a new era in its African policy. In the last seven years, Turkey has emphasized personal relationships, sought to deepen its strategic presence on the continent, and strengthened its bilateral defense and security partnerships. The centralization of power resulting from the transition to a presidential system affected Turkish foreign policy behaviour (Erşen and Köstem 2019; Haugom 2019; Donelli 2020). The decision-making process involves a limited number of individuals from an inner circle close to President Erdogan. The new structure has changed both Turkish preferences and the ways of doing politics by emphasizing more personal diplomacy. The target of Turkish policies has become the ruling elites. The new approach has found a welcoming environment in many African states. In the eyes of many African regimes, Turkey has become an opportunity to nurture the tendency to rely on external actors to dominate internally. This phenomenon reflects the extraversion theory, which explains how African elites compensate for challenges in state and institution-building processes by actively seeking external relationships and resources (Bayart 2000; Jourde 2007; Tull 2011). In other words, non-democratic regimes and elites tend to tap into external connections to accumulate wealth and consolidate their power and control over the country.

The defense and security sector has proven to be an area where Turkish economic and trade interests match African elites' needs. In terms of strengthening defense and security relations, Somalia was the first laboratory of the new Turkish approach. In 2017, Turkey established a military training camp in Mogadishu, which serves as the main Turkish military outpost on the continent, while also training the Somali National Army (SNA). A few months later, the Turkish government agreed with Sudan to open a naval post in the former Ottoman settlement of Suakin. The move highlighted Turkey's desire to increase its military footprint in a strategically important region. The agreement was later suspended following the overthrow of Omar Al-Bashir's regime. The trend was arrested in the 2019-21 biennium. The need to allocate resources in instability scenarios closer to national borders (Syria, Libya) and the outbreak of the global pandemic crisis stalled Turkish plans. Turkey had to refocus its strategic priorities (Aras and Kardaş 2021). Since 2021, Turkey has reinvigorated its agenda toward Africa by focusing primarily on investments in the security and defense sector, following a period of low profile to African issues. Rather than pursuing military outposts, Ankara has opted to increase the number of military attachés to promote its defense industry products. The change in Turkey's orientation can be attributed to

a combination of domestic and international factors, including the need to avoid international isolation and promote de-escalation with key regional players. Turkey's normalization of relations with Israel, Egypt, and the Gulf monarchies has prompted a renewed emphasis on trade in its relations with Africa. In the past, manufacturing and construction sector companies enjoyed greater influence within the Turkish decision-making process. However, the defense industry has gained greater leverage over the government's foreign policy decisions in recent years (Esen and Gumuscu 2018). Accordingly, Turkey's policy towards Africa has increasingly reflected the interests of the economic groups close to the President and JDP political elite. The Turkish companies close to the JDP or with personal ties to the President's circle, such as Lidya Medencilik in the mining sector,² Aksa Enerji in the energy sector, and the Albayrak group in the port logistics sector, have influenced the African agenda. The pro-government business block's increasing involvement in policy-making process reflects the 'crony capitalism' patterns (Diwan, Malik, and Atiyas 2019). This trend has progressively been extended to the defense sector. The Bayrak Makina, the Katmerciler family group, and Barer Holding are companies that have a voice in the policy-making process, especially toward Africa (Donelli 2022). Another determinant has been the growing popularity of Turkish-made Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs, i.e., drones). In 2021, UCAVs captured the attention of the media and international players. The employ of Turkish UCAVs, first in Libya and then in the Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict, has revealed the level of performance achieved by some Turkish combat drones, most notably the Bayraktar TB2. Besides the efficiency exhibited on the battlefield, the fame of Turkish UCAVs is due to their comparatively low costs. High performance at affordable prices has made Turkish-manufactured drones some of the most sought-after items in the international defense market (Rossiter and Cannon 2022). Many African countries have expressed interest in purchasing UCAVs from Ankara, providing new impetus to Turkey's agenda toward the continent. While Turkish-made UCAVs have garnered significant international attention, Turkey's defense portfolio extends beyond them. The popularity of Turkish drones has driven growth in the entire military-industrial sector and allowed Turkey to enhance the security dimension of its relationships with African countries. Investments in research and development have spurred comprehensive growth throughout the defense industry beyond just drones. As a result, the Turkish arms portfolio has become increasingly diverse. Companies such as Otokar, BMC, and Roketesan produce weapons, naval equipment, helicopters, armored vehicles, and more. One of the most successful Turkish products are armored

² https://www.africaintelligence.com/mining-sector_exploration-production/2020/01/14/turkish-tycoon-and-erdogan-pal-ahmet-calik-embarks-on-mining-adventure,108389233-eve

vehicles produced by Katmerciler, which are currently used by Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Uganda, and Kenya. Another Turkish item encountering great success in Africa is the Cobra armed vehicle produced by Otokar.³ Ivory Coast is among the countries that have recently purchased such vehicles. The order from the Ivorian armed forces allowed Turkey to expand its market westward. Infantry weapons, naval equipment, helicopters, and armored vehicles are some items the Turkish defense industry can offer to African countries. Consequently, Turkey has gained a more significant position in security and defense on the continent. Drones and Turkish-made military hardware have become a precious bargaining chip in economic and political negotiations with African counterparts. This trend recently became evident in both Ethiopia and Nigeria. The former is undoubtedly the most controversial since the supply of combat UCAVs came during a dramatic phase of the conflict between the Addis Ababa federal government and the federal state authorities of Tigray. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed interest in acquiring TB2 drones in the spring of 2021. Following several weeks of under-the-radar talks, the negotiations culminated with the Ethiopian Prime Minister's August visit to Ankara. During that visit, Erdogan gave the green light to sell combat drones to Ethiopians.⁴ In exchange, and in addition to the economic gain from the sale, Turkey obtained the closure of ten schools belonging to Gülen's movement and their subsequent transfer to the state agency Maarif Foundation.⁵

Toward a new phase?

Although it is premature to draw definitive conclusions, the recent changes in Turkish policy towards Africa suggest the beginning of a new phase. Turkey will increasingly need to engage with local and extra-regional actors in the coming months. Consequently, there will likely be other changes and that these will follow current trends in Turkish policy in Africa. The recent revitalization of Turkey's approach to Africa has revealed two significant trends. The first is the expansion of Turkey's areas of strategic interest. Previously, Turkey had focused on Eastern Africa, where it competed with Middle Eastern powers. However, external factors, such as France's military disengagement in Mali, have allowed Turkey to expand its interests west-

³ <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/turkeys-defense-industry-and-military-sales-in-sub-saharan-africa-trends-rationale-and-results/>

⁴ <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/savunma-sanayii-ihracati-agustos-2021/>

⁵ <https://turkiyemaarif.org/post/7-turkiye-maarif-vakfi-etiyopyadaki-fetoye-ait-tum-okullari-devraldi-1698?lang=tr>

ward. China and Russia are also seeking to capitalize on this opportunity. Another trend in Turkey's renewed focus on Africa is its use of the defense sector as a tool of military diplomacy. Ankara has signed many defense and security agreements with African countries, revealing its approach to leveraging the sector to expand its footprint. This ambition has important implications as it provides African countries with an additional defense and security partner that places fewer conditions than other traditional partners, such as the US and European countries. African states have access to defense equipment without constraints or conditionalities, regardless of their record on democracy or human rights. Additionally, the centralized decision-making process in Turkey allows for a faster conclusion of defense agreements and memorandums of understanding. The Turkish military-industrial complex's export campaign to Africa is now more coordinated from the top down than in the past. The Office of the Presidency leads the decision-making process, which oversees and concludes negotiations. However, the increased supply of military equipment, such as drones and armored vehicles, and the training of special units could have regional implications. On the one hand, it could enhance African governments' capabilities to counter rebel and insurgent groups. On the other hand, there is a risk that Turkish-trained and -equipped forces could be used as private "legions" to suppress opposition and dissent at the behest of a single leader or power elite. Further, Turkey's security interactions with African countries extend beyond just selling military hardware and technology. Ankara has tried to build a profile as a skilled actor in training special forces engaged in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. Somalia has once again been the primary testing ground for some units of the Turkish security forces, which have begun training Somali special forces (Haram'ad and Gorgor). Turkey aims to present itself as a partner to African countries in their security capacity building. Specifically, Turkey wants to position itself as an alternative to Russia, which operates through private military companies such as the well-known Wagner Group. Turkish efforts in capacity building of African security forces are, in principle, complementary to many EU initiatives on the continent. However, Turkey does not appear interested in integrating its actions in this area with European ones. Instead, it utilizes the defense and security sector to expand its footprint in Africa and gain the support of African states within international organizations. The expansion of Turkey's areas of strategic interest and using the defense sector as a political tool also puts it in a competitive position with Moscow. In the ongoing multipolar world order, Ankara and Moscow are positioning themselves as an alternative to the West's relationship of dependence and Beijing's debt-trap policy in Africa. The long-term impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine may further increase the strategic importance of the African continent. Therefore, the Turkish presence in Africa could become more strategically relevant and functional for

its traditional Western partners, containing Russian influence and countering China's dominance. In other words, Turkey's growing influence in Africa could enhance its strategic significance within the coalition of Western states over time.

Conclusion

The article highlighted two main points by analyzing the different phases of Turkish policy toward Africa from 2005 to date. The first is that the policy choices employed by Turkey in its relations with African states always turn out to be a response to inputs from both the external and the domestic spheres. The policy formulation toward Africa in the three phases is the outcome of consistent bargaining on multiple levels: international, regional, and domestic. This process has effectively prevented the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive strategy toward Africa. The second article's finding emerges precisely from this shortcoming. The lack of a clear and well-defined strategy has allowed Turkey to develop a flexible orientation that can rapidly adapt to structural changes and challenges. During these two decades, Turkey has employed practical approaches – from humanitarian intervention to security interactions – that give its footprint in Africa an image greater than its actual weight. Turkey pursues tangible and political national interests. Some policy moves seem the result of inconsistent and ephemeral policymaking; in reality, they reflect accurate pragmatic decisions to maximize gains. As a result, Turkish pragmatic flexibility, while not presenting precisely the traits of a strategy, has been revealed to be an approach particularly well suited to a fast-changing spatial and temporal context. With the evolving international landscape and heightened competition due to the war in Ukraine, Turkey could benefit from the lack of a comprehensive strategy in the coming months. Finally, an important variable to be considered concerns future domestic developments. The upcoming 2023 elections constitute yet another important watershed in Turkey's politics. The JDP-led coalition's electoral victory would give continuity to the current approach toward Africa. By contrast, an opposition victory would reconfigure foreign policy in a way that would also result in the downsizing of the African agenda.

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